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CHRISTIAN COURIER

The right to work:

How Bangladeshi women use micro-financing to create jobs

Stephanie Tombari

DHAKA, Bangladesh – Hasina Begum checks with her husband, Jobed Ali, for her age. Neither one looks sure, but they hazard a guess. "Thirty-six," she says hesitantly as her husband nods in agreement. But since Hasina joined a microcredit group in her rural village of Nandina, Bangladesh, her age seems to be one of the few things left uncertain in her life.

MICHAEL SARNACHI

Hasim Begum borrowed 600 taka from her savings group to plant six coconut plants in her yard.

"Our daughters are in school and I run my own business," she says happily. "That's something I would never have expected for our family."

Microcredit has received increased attention in recent years. Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi banker and economist, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for his groundbreaking success at implementing microcredit programs to improve the lives of the poorest of the poor in his country. It's a success that Bangladesh desperately needs: more than 100 million Bangladeshis live on $2 or less a day.

"Microcredit allows them to make $3-5 a day," says Cal Schultz, an insurance broker and member of Empower Microcredit Enterprise Development (MED), a microcredit program in Bangladesh. "They don't have to sell their sons or daughters into bonded slavery to take out a loan."

UN under-secretary general for Economic and Social Affairs. "Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable jobs, to be under-employed or without a job, to lack social protection, and to have limited access to and control over economic and financial resources."

Interestingly, it is women who most often receive microcredit loans. "Women get the loans because when you're dealing at

My daughter will have a different life.

But since the global economic crisis, the number of the world's poor has passed the one billion mark – and an estimated 70 percent are women. "Historically, economic recessions have placed a disproportionate burden on women," says Sha Zukang,

$1 a day, it is the women that are usually taking the responsibility to care for the home," says Kurt Frers, of Empower MED/OMS Canada.

With the exception of farming, men tend to have business ideas that are more difficult to implement,

See **Right to work** *on page 2*

Theme issue: women

MELANIE COOK PHOTO

Happy International Women's Day, March 8

Highlight on Health care: Part II of III

Where does all that health spending go?

Mike Wevers

EDMONTON, A.B.– As we know from the "saddle graph" in Part I (Feb. 22 *CC*), the baby boomers are going to push health care spending even higher. But where do all the billions of dollars in Canadian spending go, and are we managing it as efficiently as possible?

Hospitals and drugs take the most money

The most recent Canadian Institute for Health Information data indicates we spent $161 billion in 2007. It won't be a surprise that the largest spending component, $45 billion (28%), pays for delivering services in hospitals.

Sacre Coeur Hospital in Montreal is so crowded that patients line up in the hallways.

In the last decade, drugs have risen to second, with Canadians spending $26 billion (16%), on both prescribed and over-the-counter purchases. Publicly funded drug plans paid for around a third of this amount, with the rest being paid out of Canadian pockets directly or through other premium-based insurance programs. $2.5 billion is for over-the-counter drugs, like aspirin, acetaminophen and cough syrups (even though the efficacy of the latter is often questioned).

Doctors drive the system

While $21 billion in spending on physicians is only 13 percent of the total, it understates how much our medical doctors affect the system. Physicians drive spending in the top two components as well, so they are directly or indirectly responsible for nearly 60 percent

See **Health care** *on page 2*

News

The right to work *continued*

explains Frers, while women think in terms of how to earn money to best meet the family's needs. And when women are in a position of controlling money and a business, they achieve greater equality within their own homes and among the members of their community.

Hasina bought and planted six coconut plants after borrowing 200 taka (about $3) through her savings group. "I thought that coconut was good to plant, because the milk is a medicine, you can eat it, the leaves are useful and it's easy to grow," she explains. It was eight long years before the first fruits appeared, but one tree yielded enough seed to grow three more trees – and her business.

"There have been lots of changes (since we first planted) – lots!" she continues. "And I'd never got out before; I had no self confidence. I was shy and afraid to speak up. But now, that's changing. I have courage to talk and speak my mind. I have a voice. I'm even the chairperson of my group."

Women's savings group in the village of Nandina, Bangladesh.

Michael Sarrachi

A mobile phone money transfer service called M-PESA has revolutionized opportunities for women in Kenya since 2007. No bank account is required. Even poor country villages have wireless service and many rural people have cell-phones. A Kenyan cooked up the idea of M-PESA, and it makes a lot of things possible – including a sustainable future for Africans. Poor people in rural areas can buy high-efficiency stoves through M-PESA or receive deposits for chickens and vegetables sold to city markets. They can also receive money from children who leave the village to find employment in the city. Funds deposited to phones can be turned into cash at village shops.

Nurturing their talents

In the capital city of Dhaka, Aklima attended her savings group for nearly a year before telling her husband.

"When I joined, the group was collecting 5Tk a week in savings. Sometimes I didn't eat, saving 1-2Tk per week to attend," she says. "I was afraid my husband would find out and say, 'You don't need any money from me if you are giving away that much each week.'"

But Aklima found a clever way to solve her problem. "I borrowed 25,000Tk ($350) from my women's group and got a job for him with the city as a cleaner," she says wryly. (Municipal jobs in Dhaka, such as street cleaning, require the applicant to pay a fee to be hired.) "My husband couldn't ignore how my joining the group helped our family."

Activists for Social Alternatives (ASA) at a rally in Tamil Nadu, India. ASA reaches 2.6 million women.

Soon Aklima's husband had joined a men's group to learn about saving money and gender equality. "There was a real change in his attitude," she recalls. "The justice training in his group made him more sensitive to my needs. We didn't fight so much, and he started to understand my point of view."

"It's not enough to say, 'I let my wife go to group, and I send both my son and my daughter to school,'" says Kohima Daring, country consultant for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in Bangladesh. "We like to challenge the group to think more deeply about the issues and to encourage men and women to be advocates for women's rights within their own communities."

And a woman's right to earn an income is a right that promises hope for the next generation: "I made many mistakes," Alkima says. "But my daughter will have a different life. She can wait to marry; it's okay! Her husband will be a good man, and she will be educated. This is my dream for my daughter."

Stephanie Tombari is a freelance writer from Burlington, Ontario.

Health care *continued*

of spending to meet Canadians' health care needs. When Canadians talk about wanting more access to health care, it is primarily these top three components that will need more funding.

Public Health services are important too

The other 40 percent ($67 billion) is obviously not a small sum. It includes $13 billion in capital and administration costs, some of which would be incurred by the top three components. It also includes $16 billion in spending on institutions like nursing homes and residential care centres, which most assuredly will continue to rise with the aging population. Other professionals (primarily dentists, optometrists, and chiropractors) account for $17 billion (11%), very little of which is publicly funded. It also pays $10 billion for public health, such as health inspections, public health nursing and well baby clinics, drug and food safety, and community mental health programs, all areas that many Canadian health experts believe are vastly under funded.

More women in white coats

Most provinces are working with physicians to improve how health care is delivered, and to address perceived and real shortages in the physician workforce. Given the theme of this issue of *CC*, it may be beneficial to look briefly at the issue of achieving greater gender equality in the physician workforce. There has been a three-fold increase in female family physicians since 1978; 40 percent of family physicians are now female. There was even a larger increase in female Specialists over that period, but still only about 30 percent of all Specialists are female. There are many benefits to greater gender equality; however, the shift has had some unanticipated consequences in physician availability. Female physicians are more likely to work part time, including time off for maternity leave. Combine this with the push for all physicians to achieve a better life/work balance, not to mention an aging physician workforce, and we are getting fewer services from the same number of physicians than we were even a decade ago.

The need for better physician access has led to some welcome and necessary changes. We know that the most appropriate health care practitioner should see each patient. Great effort is made so that physicians can work within a multi-disciplinary primary health care network which focuses on the wellness of their patients. In some regions, rather than pay the physician per clinic visit, an annual fee is paid to a clinic to care for their patients' needs throughout the year. Office visits are only scheduled if necessary.

Canadians, and most OECD nations (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), have also benefited significantly in recent decades by increased efficiency in surgeries and post-operative care, resulting in reduced "average length of stay" (ALOS) in hospitals. Patients enjoy less invasive surgical procedures and quicker recovery times; Canadians benefited from having hospital beds turned over more quickly and available for the next patients on the waiting list. Arthroscopic surgery, for example, brought significant gains in orthopaedic surgery. Heart surgeries are also less invasive: bypass surgeries used to require open chest cuts, but now many are done by small incisions and robotic assisted instruments through the rib cage. Recovery times have also been reduced from weeks to days. Unfortunately, most recent evidence indicates these efficiencies have maxed out, as ALOS data now show a marginal increase.

Why spending will go up

The unspoken request during complaints about doctor shortages, difficult access and waiting lists is more spending. If more efficiency cannot be achieved, it seems the simple answer Canadians want is to pay to open more hospital beds and pay more doctors for services.

In fact, Alberta announced plans to do that very thing recently. After months of the government telling its Alberta Health Services Board (Alberta now administers health delivery through one provincial board) to find ways to get rid of its $1.3 billion deficit, the

See **Health care** *on page 3*

News

Getting to the root of the problem:

Women, poverty and inequality in Canada

"Playing for Keeps," a documentary from the National Film Board of Canada, illustrates the lives of young single mothers.

Rebekah Sears

Debbie understands only too well the harsh realities of being a woman living in poverty. Forced into single motherhood in order to escape abusive relationships, Debbie recalls the daily struggles of raising three children on her own.

She would go hungry so her children could eat while constantly worrying about how to pay for other necessities, such as a safe home for her family. As a single mother Debbie could only work part-time jobs, which have few benefits and low wages. She used social assistance to care for her children when childcare was too expensive or unavailable.

Debbie is not alone. There are hundreds of thousands of women across Canada who find themselves in similar circumstances. According to Statistics Canada, women working full time in 2007 made 71 percent of what men would. Pay equity first became an issue in the 1960s when the numbers of women entering the workforce increased significantly. Although the labour force composition has changed significantly since then, the pay gap persists.

Many women work part-time or in temporary positions, which results in lower wages and fewer benefits. The shift to part-time is often due to responsibilities caring for children or elderly relatives.

Falling through the cracks

Closely tied to issues of employment are the social situations that impact women more than men, particularly single parenthood. More than one in five single mothers live in poverty. They are among the poorest in Canada, five times more likely to be living in poverty than women in two-parent families, and more than twice as likely as single fathers.

The lack of accessible, quality childcare creates a vicious cycle of poverty for many single mothers. With a low income, they cannot afford to pay for care if any spaces are available. They are then forced to take part-time jobs forcing them to spend most of their incomes on housing and food, not allowing them to set any aside for childcare in the future.

Public justice calls for the development of government policies that protect the equitable treatment of all people. It also calls for specific attention to those most vulnerable or with unique needs, including women, recognizing that such groups are more likely to face injustice under general policies.

In order to stop the cycle of poverty in Canada, we need a comprehensive poverty elimination strategy with strong government leadership that includes a wide range of sectors. Such a strategy must include policies that address the specific needs of women. This should include an investigation into the roots of employment inequity and a strategy for eliminating the wage gap. Another priority must be an evaluation of the various childcare systems and child tax benefit programs, reshaping them to address the specific needs of women, especially single mothers.

In order to eliminate poverty for the thousands of Canadian women like Debbie, we must develop policies that address the very root of the problem.

Rebekah Sears is CPJ's public justice intern.

Women in leadership

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

At one time it was thought that men alone were fit to be kings, because a monarch was expected to lead his troops into battle against his country's enemies. It was inconceivable that he should remain in the palace while his men were dying on the battlefield. Given this assumption, many European countries, such as Luxembourg and the Kingdom of Hanover, were governed by Salic Law, which provided that only a man could inherit a throne.

Of course not every country was bound by this, and indeed some of the most memorable monarchs in history were women. In the Bible we read of the unnamed Queen of Sheba, probably located in modern Yemen or Ethiopia, visiting King Solomon after hearing of his great wisdom (I Kings 10). In the decades before Jesus' birth, Cleopatra VII Philopator came to rule alone as the last pharaoh of Egypt prior to that country becoming a Roman province. In the 15th century Caterina Cornaro ruled as the last queen of the Latin kingdom of Cyprus before that island was annexed by Venice in 1489.

Women rulers were often subject to the machinations of their male relatives, advisors, lovers and suitors, as with Cleopatra and Caterina. Yet some lent their names to entire eras. England's Queen Elizabeth I ruled from 1558 to 1603, a period now known as the Elizabethan era. The language of the Book of Common Prayer, Shakespeare and the King James Bible is often called Elizabethan English. A savvy ruler, Elizabeth successfully countered the aggressive policies of the male rulers of Europe and enjoyed a long, if not entirely peaceful, rule in her own right – something thought unimaginable a few decades earlier.

Centuries later, Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 and presided over an era during which Britain rose to great power status, exercising sway over a huge swath of the globe. At her death in 1901, Victoria had stamped her somewhat austere personality on not only Britain, but the entire world. At the present Queen's accession to the throne in 1952, some observers saw the dawn of a new Elizabethan era. If she should reign another eight years, she will surpass the long reign of her great-great-grandmother.

Reign or rule?

Of course, contemporary monarchs reign but do not rule. Accordingly, history will likely remember not so much Elizabeth or Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, but Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the Philippines' Corazón Aquino and Israel's Golda Meir. These women did more than just preside over the business of government; they came to office with a policy agenda and did their utmost to implement it, sometimes even achieving impressive military victories. In so doing they left a lasting mark on their countries.

Some would argue that these leaders did what they did *despite* being women, in that they simply made their way to the top as if gender did not matter. Others argue that it is *because* they were women that they were able to do what they did. Whichever interpretation is correct, it is nevertheless true that God has gifted many women with the unique skills for political leadership.

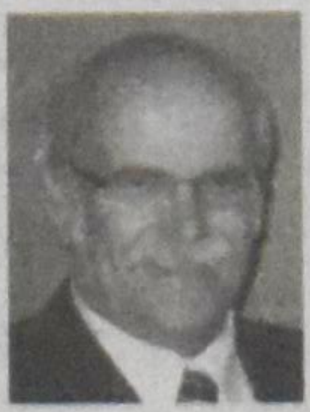
Of course, being a woman does not necessarily make a leader more competent or of better character than her male counterpart. Ultimately men and women alike bear a weighty responsibility for their conduct in public office, which will be judged, not by gender, but by the principles of justice to which everyone is bound.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is now blogging at: http://firstthings.com/blogs/evangel/.

Health care *continued*

province's 2010 budget instead decided to cover that deficit and increase the Board's budget. The provincial government's reversal also means the Board has money to spend before fiscal 2009-10 ends; $8 million was "found" to immediately undertake 2,300 more surgeries and 3,500 more diagnostic scans! Albertans, who already enjoy some of the shortest waiting lists in the country, will be glad.

So in all provinces, including Alberta, access to medical services is controlled by spending management, set out in annual budgets, which are monitored to "help" health bureaucrats make appropriate health delivery decisions – code words for rationing services and managing wait lists. It is this public management, and its associate rationing, that so many in the United States rail against. They know that Americans who can afford direct payments or are served by an excellent health care plan delivered through their work-place funded Health Management Organizations (HMO) enjoy more access to medical services than Canadians. Americans do pay more for this than Canadians (and all other OECD nations), spending a much larger share of their GDP on health care. Notwithstanding this extra spending, over 30 million Americans (or close to the whole Canadian population) have much poorer access than Canadians because they cannot afford to pay nor are they part of an HMO. The final article in this series will look at these two systems, examine why some Canadians think that we need more of the private sector delivery enjoyed in the United States, and why some U.S. lawmakers look covetously at the system we have in place in Canada.



Mike Wevers was Director of Physician Services for 5 years in Alberta Health and Wellness, responsible for negotiating and administering the government's Master Agreement with the Alberta Medical Association. You can read Part I of this series at www.christiancourier.ca.

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Editorials

In praise of women

Brett Alan Dewing

Two recent musical viewing experiences have made me reflect on the position of women in society. I recently travelled to New York City to see Angela Lansbury and Catherine Zeta-Jones headline the first Broadway revival of Stephen Sondheim's masterpiece, *A Little Night Music*. While the production was disappointing, the genius of Sondheim's music and lyrics again struck me. The show deals with many complex issues in what may be called race-relations between men and women. In "In Praise of Women," one particularly misogynistic character calls his subject "a functional but ornamental race." Among the show's many *bon mots*, this one strikes me as a brilliant reflection of women's historical lot.

This outlook is insightfully examined in the recent film, *Nine*. When I first heard that Rob Marshall had chosen to make *Nine* into a film, I was confused. The original Broadway show has always underwhelmed me, and the movie on which it was based, Fellini's *8 ½*, is the posterchild for film buff pretensions. But after seeing the film, it makes perfect sense. *Nine* is a show about cinema. It is also about how cinema treats women and how that treatment can be a reflection of the way men view their female companions.

7 from 9

In the film version of *Nine*, each woman in the cast performs a fantasy musical number in a tradition theatrical style. These songs, and the ways they are staged, cast the women as sexualized performers putting on a variety of roles to please the man in their life (Daniel Day-Lewis as film director Guido Contini). His mistress is a burlesque seductress. His longtime costume designer is an MC surrounded by French follies girls. A journalist dazzles as a go-go girl amid glitter and spraying champagne. His mother, surrounded by candles and curtains, is revivified saint. A neighbourhood prostitute dances as a fiery gypsy.

Two other characters' fantasy roles struck me the most. Firstly, Contini's muse, an iconic actress portrayed by iconic actress Nicole Kidman, performs a ballad, clad in elaborate fur, a costume gown and an elegant wig. Contini has just explained the new character he has written for her: a classical muse embodying the elevated beauty that drives all artists. She responds that she would rather play the artist before singing of her conflicting, far-from-idealized feelings towards him. As she finishes, she leaves Contini holding her wig and tells him that she is tired of being his idolized muse.

Finally, Contini's wife (Oscar winner Marion Cotillard) is the only character to perform two songs. In the first, she is a demure, buttoned-up part of the scenery, singing a sombre torchsong about her husband's career. This is how she feels, and in part how Guido sees her. She is no match for the sirens flaunting their attributes in the other numbers. She is defined by him (the song is even called "My Husband Makes Movies") and is all motherly martyrdom and concern.

In her second song, she performs a tawdry strip-tease while singing to her husband, in the audience. Her heartbreaking performance speaks volumes about both of them. He strips everything from her, asking for too much, and she gives it all, becoming a spectacle in the process. She ends up feeling like one of his cheap floozies, baring her soul for his pleasure and ending up with nothing.

Your response

I do believe that women have come a long way in our society, but I was struck by how relevant these situations seemed. One look at today's media industry illustrates them as clearly as the numbers in *Nine* and the lyrics of *A Little Night Music*.

Our cameras are male eyes, presenting women as chaste idealized muses, safe domestic possessions, or sexual objects from which we demand all they have to give. "A functional but ornamental race" indeed.

As Christians, let us sing a different tune, a true "In Praise of Women" that echoes Proverbs 31. For one such paean, see Ellen Vanderwerf's piece on page 13. Afterwards, post your own versions of "In Praise to Women" on christiancourier.ca.

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Canada

All mothers work, but the pay really varies

Amgela Ritsema Bick

Three months after our first daughter was born, I went back to work. We had no other income, and I thought it would be easy to handle something part-time. It wasn't. I borrowed a colleague's office for privacy to pump breast-milk every noon hour. I tried to teach on intermittent sleep. Once, I reached into my purse to pull out my keys and ended up trying to unlock a classroom door with a soother.

March 8 is International Women's Day – a chance to reflect on how the lives of girls and women have changed for the better in the last fifty years. Our daughter, for example, might grow up to become a lawyer, politician or doctor. She can participate in professional sports. She's less likely than her grandmother to face discrimination at work, and she'll be taken seriously if she makes a claim of harassment. She'll be paid more than women in 1960, since the wage gap between genders has shrunk.

But sometimes I wonder if she'll truly have the choice to be in her own home during the day, and – if so – whether she'll take it. After earning the right to enter the workforce, women seem reluctant to work in the ways they used to: managing a household and taking care of children. And the doors that have opened for women still slam shut when mothers try to edge through.

No one will deny that it's difficult to mix children and a career. Clearly some professions (such as teaching) make the combination a little easier, whereas others (like law) make it harder for mothers to succeed. Much depends on the demands of each job's schedule and whether wages increase with experience. Mothers usually choose to work fewer hours than men to be with their children, which can hinder advancement. They are also more likely than fathers to accept part-time or lower-paying jobs. The self-administered pay cuts underscore that our society (us included) values productive members of the workforce more than it values mothers.

The doors that have opened for women still slam shut when mothers try to edge through.

Alongside the financial drawbacks are emotional ones. Raising children won't win you any awards, promotions or signing bonuses. Hardly anyone affirms that the work is meaningful or important – not even Christians. Because so many mothers do end up working outside the house, those at home with children may be isolated. The social structures that were in place when everyone on the street was home with the kids are gone.

But raising our own children remains important work. When we disregard the role of mothers, kids suffer. One parent at home for the first three years establishes a sense of security and trust; it creates life-long paths for communication and allows for bonding. If children are emotionally neglected, the repercussions outlast childhood. In fact, the attachment between parents and children are crucial for each child's well-being and sense of worth as an adult. These benefits need to be recognized even if they can't be quantified.

A fine balance

I think that most women need meaningful employment at some point. But children, especially small ones, need their mothers. So if mothers who want to stay home feel they can't afford it, or if mothers are penalized for taking time off, then something is not right. The United States only offers 12 weeks unpaid leave for new moms. Canadian parents can expect 55 percent of their income from the government for baby's first year. To truly encourage parents to raise their own children, however, financial assistance for three years would be even better. Raising well-balanced children who are physically, emotionally and socially healthy is at least as important as all the other posts women occupy.

For a practical reason – dwindling population – governments in developed countries are coming to the same conclusion. Many are experimenting with ways to make things easier for working mothers. In Germany, parents receive *Elterngeld* (parent's salary) from the state equal to 65 percent of their regular income. Austria, Hungary and Finland give up to three years of paid leave to parents. Companies in the Netherlands brag about being flexible to accommodate part-time mothers.

When our second daughter was born, I was able to stay home. But because I didn't have official employment during that pregnancy, I was not eligible for maternity benefits. Nonetheless, I am glad that girls today are surrounded by opportunities. Angela Merkel, Germany's first female chancellor, is an inspiring example – *Time* calls her "the most powerful leader in Europe." I just hope that these same girls feel equally able to hold a fulfilling job and hold their own children, without feeling like one choice comes at the expense of the other. I want our daughters to see motherhood as a calling on par with the highest-ranking executive, and to have the freedom to embrace it.

Letters

What's **your** story?

Announcing the *Christian Courier* Short Story Contest!

I: Send in your original, short fiction (1000 to 3000 words) on any theme by June 15, 2010. First prize receives $100 and publication in a summer issue of *Christian Courier*. Second prize receives a year's subscription. All stories must be submitted electronically to *brett@christiancourier.ca* . Entries over the word limit will not be considered.

II: Our readers 7 to 14 years of age can participate in the category for youth. Send your short stories (under 1000 words) to Brett Dewing at *brett@christiancourier.ca* before June 15, 2010. The two best submissions will win a gift certificate to Toys'R'Us, valued at $50 (first place) and $25 (second place). All stories will be considered for publication in CC.

On diversity, trust and a Dutch Moses

Thank you Bert for initiating a discussion on "Don't bind our consciences, please" (*CC* Jan 25). A 36-4 vote by Calvin College's faculty senate that the memo [forbidding advocacy of homosexual practice] be withdrawn is a clear indication that we must reposition ourselves on this issue. A good start would be that Calvin College cuts it strings with the CRC. It is not the mission of the institutional church to have a liberal arts college under its wings. Like-minded independent educational institutions in our circle have proved to serve us well.

We hire faculty on the basis of their integrity and expertise and appoint them in a position of trust. To restrict them on issues of concern among us causes alienation and division, as you indicate has happened in the past. Moreover, we smother open dialogue and we are the poorer for it.

Trust is still one of the pillars in our society and should be even more so among us.

Often in our disputes, there is an underlying element of distrust and suspicion which has a paralyzing effect on us. Our striving and establishing unity through our documents has failed us. We find our strength in our diversity; unity we find in Christ at the foot of the cross and nowhere else.

Splintered

That brings me to the schism in the fall and winter of 1944/45 in the Netherlands, which Bert W. alludes to. It still astonishes me that it happened in the darkest days of Dutch history: interrogations and executions by the Gestapo, able men rounded up for forced labor in Germany, bombing raids, and much destruction and loss of life. Severe hunger drove us as churches together on Wednesday evenings for prayer and meditation. Even in those circumstances, we in the Reformed church continued our heated debates and turned our backs on each other.

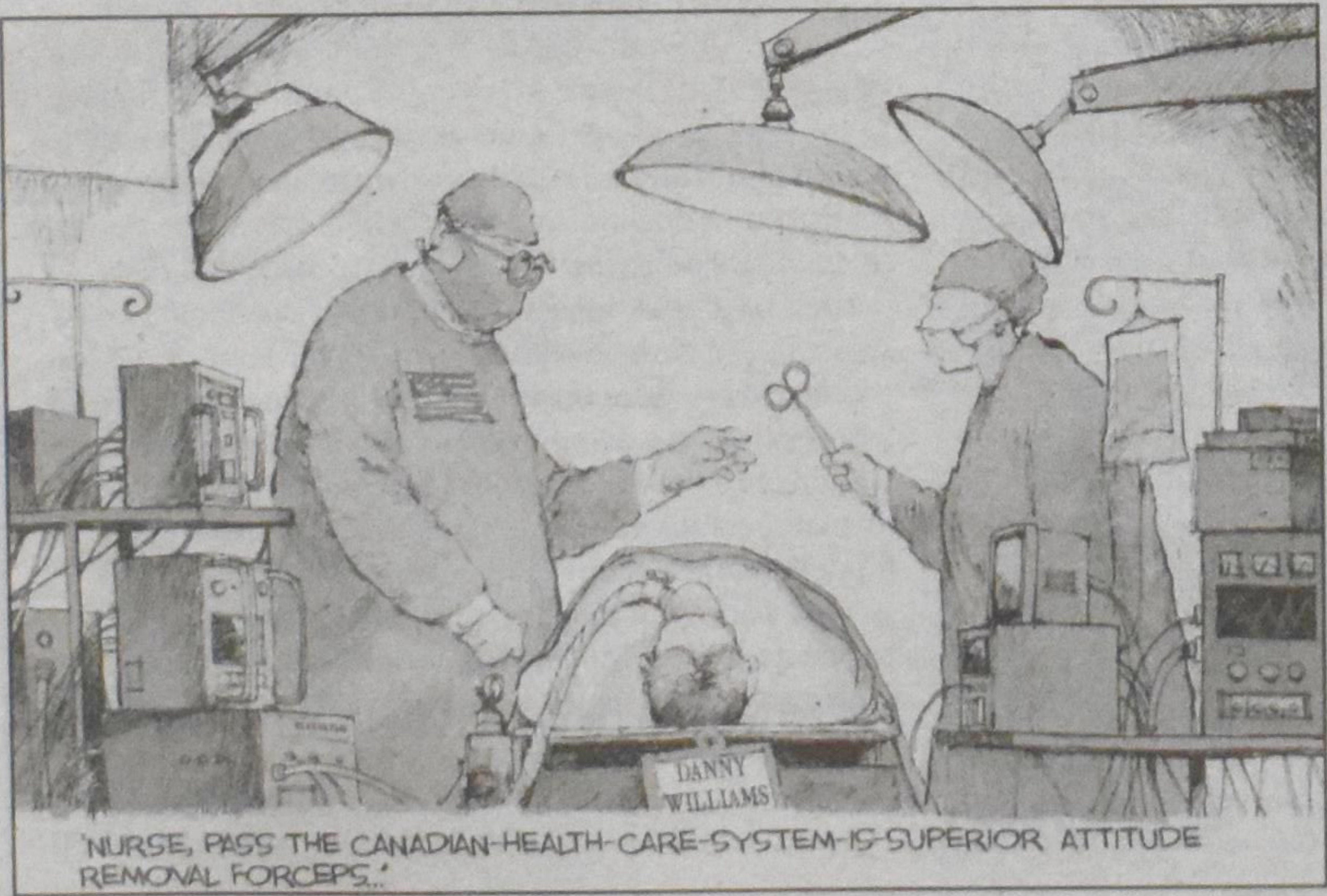
The rivalry was between synod and Professor Klaas Schilder, one of the more prominent theologians we had at the time and very popular with students. When he died of a massive heart attack in 1952 (untimely) a correspondent in "*Trouw*" (Dutch daily) pictured him as the Moses of the New Testament who led his people out of the house of bondage.

Synods have the danger of becoming the house of bondage.

Our synods have lightened up over the past decade. I sense a good camaraderie, healthy humor and no lack of prayer. Without their propositions the word of the Lord will continue to stand forever (Luther).

I trust that Synod will ignite fires that will give warmth, shed light and inspire us to carry on.

Evert Wassink
Forest, Ontario



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Two historical inaccuracies

Chris Steenhof, in "Redeeming sports" (Jan. 11), suggests that the Olympic Games have been hijacked by political causes. But that is a misleading statement. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founding father of the Olympic Games, was a fervent nationalist appalled by France's crushing defeat by the Prussians in 1870. One of the reasons for the defeat he found in the poor physical condition of the soldiers. He suggested physical education/sports as a means to overcome this weakness. His dream ultimately led to the Olympic Games, but nationalism was at the root of them. In other words, politics and the Olympic Games were intimately intertwined right from the start. No hijacking here.

Harry Antonides referred to Churchill's 1938 book *While England Slept*, "in which he castigated the British for turning a blind eye to the Nazi monster while it was building a massive military machine" (Jan. 11 *CC*). That book contributed to the myth that England was unprepared. If he, and Antonides, had bothered to look, for instance, at the British budgets since 1936 then they could have known that a significant amount of money was allocated to building airplanes, planes that later successfully won the battle for British airspace. While Churchill wrote quite a few readable history books, his interpretations are often questionable and self-serving. While his warning was relevant, his notion of unpreparedness belongs to the realm of myth.

Bert den Boggende
Brooks, Alberta

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Opinions

Depart from conflict, don't exaggerate it

I would like to respond to two recent articles by Harry Antonides, both dealing with the expansion of Islam in Europe and North America. As an Asian-born Canadian-by-choice, I lived till my 15th year in Asia, mainly among Muslims and some Hindus and Buddhists.

In both his articles, Antonides comes to the conclusion that the present manifestation of Islam is far from being peaceful and we (Christian Canadians) should encourage Canada to follow the Swiss who voted last December to ban the addition of minarets on mosques, the Muslim house of worship. Minarets symbolize Islam's supremacy as the true religion.

Antonides references Rev Marvin Heyboer, who reviews the history of the spread of Islam mainly by force and violence (jihad). Heyboer has visited three African countries where Jews, Christians and non-Muslims have been persecuted by fanatic Muslim groups. We have to remember, however, that all three countries were for centuries colonies of the British Kingdom. Though white Europeans were always in the minority, we were in control by our police and military forces. I do not deny of these persecutions by Muslims, but all three countries have large segments of Christians. In Nigeria the Christians are almost 48 percent of the population; in Egypt perhaps 10 percent. There are many Christians living with Muslims in Kenya, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Angola, and Mozambique.

What bothers me very much is that in most cases

A minaret installed on the roof of a Turkish cultural centre in Wangen bei Olten, northwestern Switzerland.

mentioned by Heyboer, Muslims persecute small Christian groups. These Muslims abuse their offices of authorities, that is true. However, there are some Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia where Christians are able to practice their faith and establish schools. Not all Muslim governments persecute non-Muslims, though they have clashes between Muslims and Christians.

When serious clashes occur, the local authorities often try to do justice. At times, they are slow, but they do come to aid. Former colonies with a large Muslim population have to learn that Christianity is not a white religion, but (like Judaism, Hinduism and some Chinese religions), it is an ancient religion.

I experienced severe persecutions by Muslims and by some others during World War II. But we must not forget that the former colonial rulers of occupied countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the American continent did not always rule as true followers of Jesus Christ. In many ways we have failed to be true in the sense of human rights, democracy and freedom. There were times when our Christian ancestors enforced the Christian faith by demanding baptism of all the people they had just subjected to their rule. When the Roman Catholics were in power, they persecuted the Protestants, and later on it was vice versa.

In this light I want quote the present leader of Indonesia, President Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono, who sees tolerance-building as the central task of the 21st century. He wrote in the Economist recently about *How to let Islam and the West live in Harmony.* Indonesia is at the moment the largest Muslim country in the world. There almost over 200 million Muslims living in this archipelago, my home for 15 years.

President Yudhoyono says, "The big question for 2010 . . . is whether the world's civilizations, religions and cultures will finally depart from their persistent pattern of conflict. . . . People all over the world are beginning to realize that co-operation yields dividends not only within civilizations, but also between and among them. Racism is in decline, and apartheid is gone. The number of countries adhering to religious freedom and the portion of global citizens living under open, pluralistic societies are at their highest ever. At the start of the last century, there were only a handful of democracies; today there are 89 free democracies. In the Muslim world, the Organization of the Islamic Conference has committed its members to promoting democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and good governance."

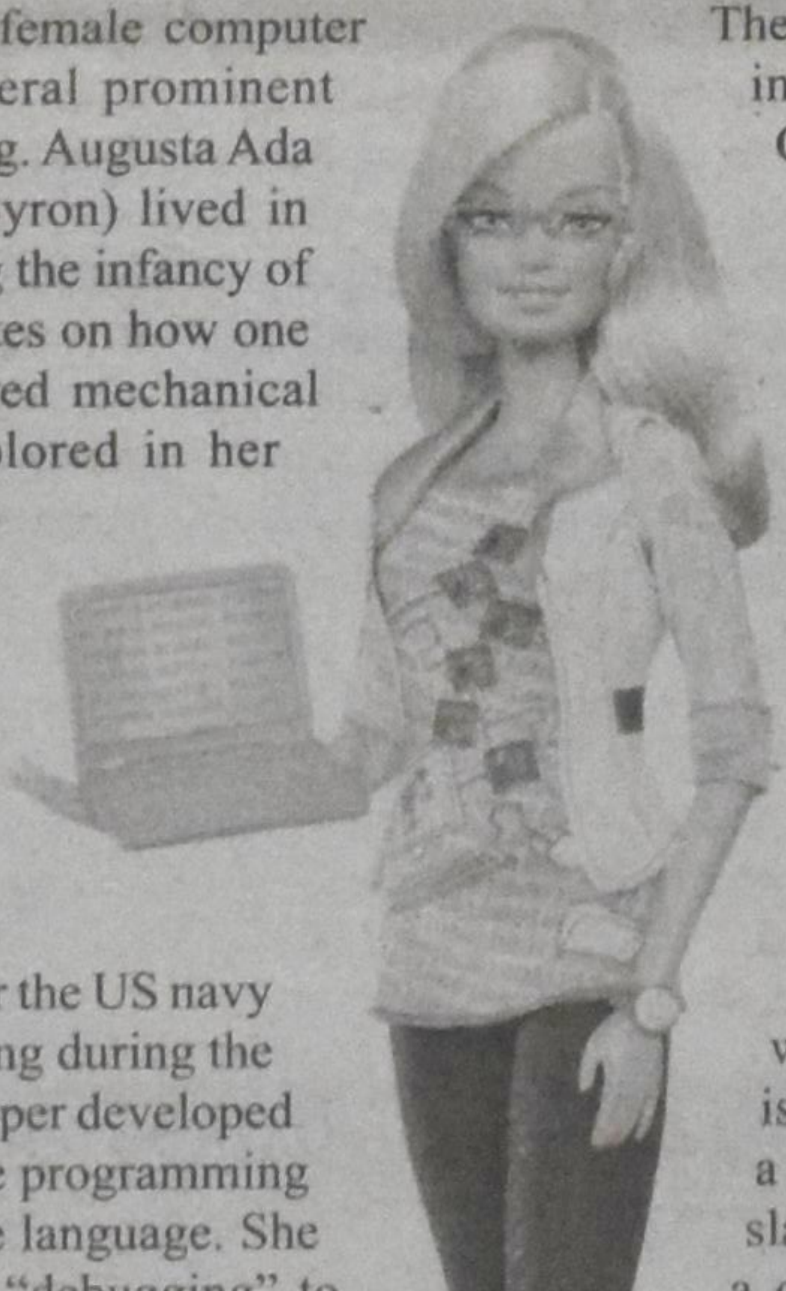
God knows all my sins, as well as those of my ancestors. I plead to God that he can help us imagine his son Jesus among us. Help us to reveal God's presence on earth.

Aren P. Geisterfer
Gatineau, Quebec

Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Women and computing

According to Statistics Canada, in 2009 roughly 58 percent of students in university were women. In most areas of study, such as the social sciences and arts, women outnumber men. However, in areas such as mathematics, computer science and engineering women are still a minority. These numbers are also reflected in professions such as engineering and information technology, where men vastly outnumber women.



Despite the small number of female computer scientists, there have been several prominent women in the history of computing. Augusta Ada Byron (daughter of poet Lord Byron) lived in the mid-nineteenth century during the infancy of computers. She made detailed notes on how one could program the steam-powered mechanical computers that were being explored in her day. For this reason she is widely recognized as the world's first computer programmer and a modern programming language called Ada is named after her. Another famous woman in computing was Grace Hopper (or "Amazing Grace" as she is sometimes called) who worked for the US navy as one of the pioneers of computing during the mid-twentieth century. Grace Hopper developed the first compiler used to translate programming languages into low-level machine language. She also helped popularize the term "debugging" to describe the fixing of computer errors. This term was inspired by an actual event when her colleagues discovered a moth trapped in a relay in an early computer. A battleship, the *USS Hopper*, was named in her honour.

Despite the notable contributions of women such as these to computing, why are there so few women in these fields? In a time when women outnumber men in university education, why are these disciplines so under-represented? Some have suggested that common misconceptions, such as the notion that computer scientists are "geeks" that sit in cubicles coding all day, discourage female students from entering the discipline. Are the higher numbers of women in the social sciences and the higher numbers of men in technology simply a reflection of the some of the creational differences between men and women? If so, have male-dominated professions such as computing established pedagogical practices and cultures that discourage talented women from pursuing studies in this area?

Decoding the prejudice

Today there are several groups that advocate and promote engineering and computing for women. These organizations include the IEEE Women in Engineering (WIE), the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, and the ACM Committee on Women in Computing. Part of the work of organizations such as these is to reach out and mentor young girls to consider a career in engineering and computing.

These organizations have recently received some support from an unexpected source. Mattel, the makers of the popular Barbie doll, recently held an online vote to select Barbie's next career (see: www.barbie.com/vote). As it turns out, "Computer Engineer Barbie" won the popular vote. This is a far cry from the controversial 1992 Barbie doll which was programmed to say "Math class is hard!" This new Barbie is shown holding a pink netbook computer and dressed in dark slacks with an attractive top decorated with a computer set in a background pattern of binary ones and zeroes. She wears hip glasses and sports a blue-tooth headset. Mattel points out that her accessories were chosen with the help of the Society of Women Engineers and the National Academy of Engineering. Will this "Computer Engineer Barbie" motivate some young girls to emulate her (career-wise anyways)? Computing can certainly benefit from the continued participation of both talented men and women.

Dr. Derek Schuurman (dschuurman@cs.redeemer.ca) has studied in departments of electrical and computer engineering at two Ontario universities where the number of female students was quite small.

Behind closed doors

Anita Brinkman

CHATHAM, Ontario – At the Women's Centre, I faced a heavy, steel door with a very solid-looking lock. Having announced my purpose into the intercom, I was free to enter – the first door. After I had passed another steel door, I waited while staff went to confirm with the residential manager that she was indeed expecting me. A third door – this one requiring a code – had to be opened before she came to greet me. It is a world of tight security: locked doors, shatter-proof glass, security cameras, unlisted telephone numbers, curfews. . . . Even the website has a section aimed at teaching students about healthy relationships.

One of the goals of the Chatham-Kent Women's Centre is to educate people about the different kinds of abuse, and to let people know that there is help for anyone in an abusive situation.

Classic power struggles

So, what is abuse? What would make a woman, and often her children, leave home and take refuge in a shelter – sometimes even in another community – to find safety? It is a complex and sensitive issue affecting all levels of society friends; following or harassing; destroying property; taking control of all decisions; threatening injury to the abused person or to himself if the abused leaves.

The common denominators are power and control. This is what the Women's Centre staff want the public to know. Tonya Verburg, the Residential Manager of the Women's Centre in Chatham, says that even the simple act of putting a sign on their building has had an impact. "It makes a building public; it's no longer a secret of the community," she says. "It opens the issue and gives people confidence to access our services."

Abuse can take a variety of forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial and social.

marked with, "Is it safe for you to be online? How to hide your internet activities." This world is foreign to many of us; however, it is a daily reality for too many women.

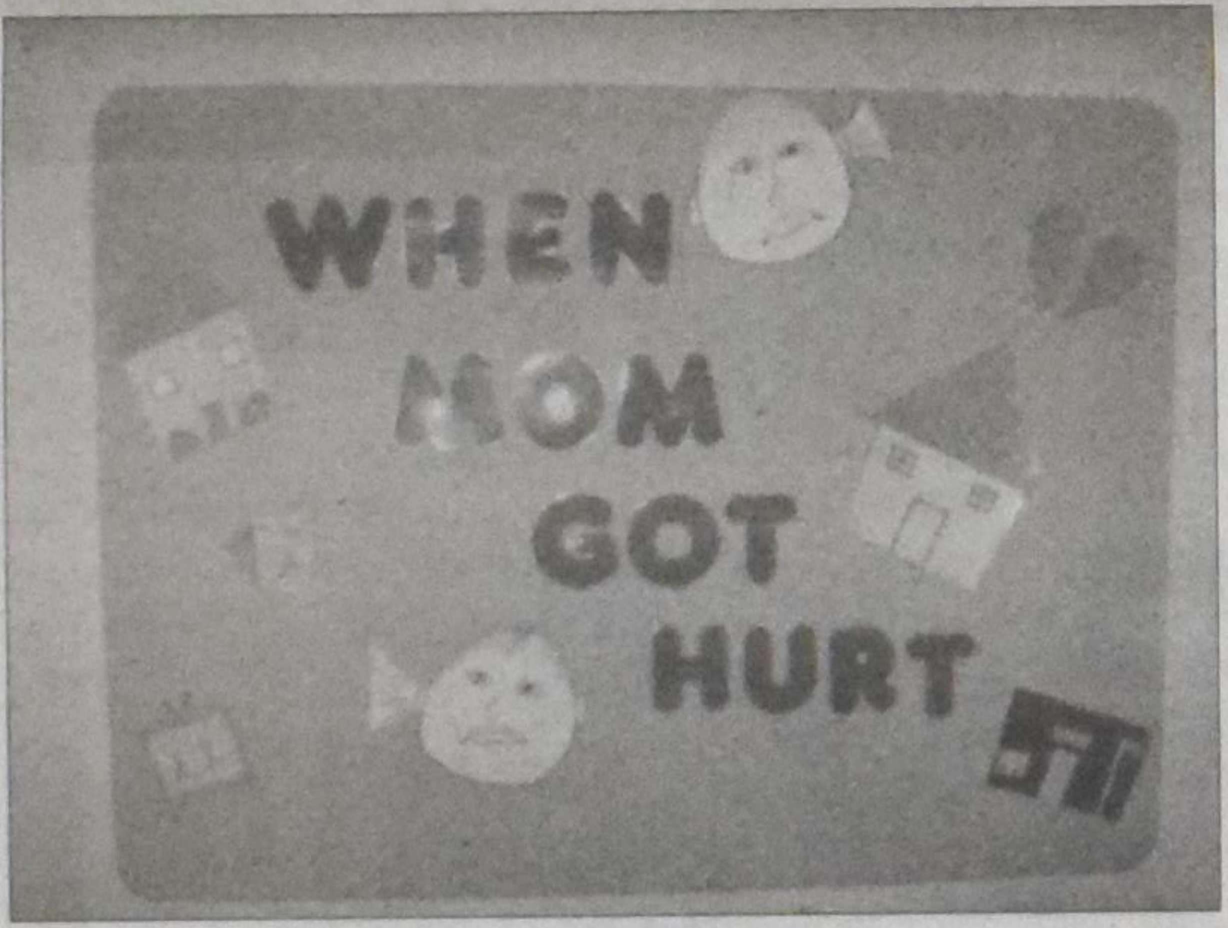
The Chatham-Kent Women's Centre in Chatham, Ontario, which has been providing service and refuge to women in abusive situations for over thirty years, is representative of the five hundred shelters available to women in many cities and towns throughout Canada. The Centre offers a 24 hour crisis/help line as well as a 27-bed emergency shelter for women and their children. Other services provided by the Centre include counseling, either at the Centre or in out-lying communities; help with transitions out of abusive situations; support groups; and public awareness work, including school-based programs and education. Abuse can take a variety of forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial and social. Most people think of physical violence: slapping, pushing, throwing things, or other displays of force or anger. Other forms of abuse, however, can be just as damaging and are more difficult to identify as abuse: control of time, activities, or clothing; limiting or forbidding contact with family or

Moving forward

In recent years, there has been an increase in women reporting abuse to police and seeking help; Verburg says these statistics may not show a rise in occurrence of abuse, but that "abuse is not the shameful issue we have made it to be. It's not her fault," she stresses. "Other things, like job loss, alcoholism, financial issues . . . are just contributing factors."

There is no "typical" situation of abuse, since the dynamics and experiences of abuse are as diverse as the

See **Centre** *on page 8*



The ugly stats

182 – the average number of female victims of homicide in Canada each year.

62 – the average number of female victims of spousal homicide in Canada each year.

7% – the estimated percentage of women in a current or previous spousal relationship who experienced spousal violence during the past five years.

44% – the percentage of female victims of spousal abuse who indicated that they suffered injury because of violence, with 13% seeking medical attention.

24% – the percentage of Aboriginal women who said they had suffered violence from a current or previous partner in the past five-year period.

58,486 – the number of women who seek refuge in one of 473 shelters across Canada per year.

Source: Statistics Canada, www.statscan.gc.ca

Country living
Maynard van der Galien

'Farm Seen' weddings

Some years ago – eight or nine at least – *Ontario Farmer* magazine asked their readers to send in farm photos. "Send us your scenes from the farm along with a detailed description", says the invitation. It was a brilliant idea.

Each week, at the top of page 2, the magazine runs three coloured photos that readers have submitted. The heading "Farm Seen" says it all. And each week they ask readers to send in the pictures.

It's the most popular feature of the magazine. If there's too many they run a full page of pictures. But only three are featured on the second page.

There are no prizes for the best picture. Nobody is singled out as being a great photographer. The caption underneath just gives the names and place and a small description of the event.

If you want to see what young kids are doing on the farm, or how semi-retired farmers like restoring old tractors, it's in the Farm Seen. Sometimes there are photos of a child or children too close to large farm animals. That doesn't always sit well with the farm safety folks and concerned parents. Readers write in and point out the danger.

Wedding pictures are a real hit. Many of the photos featured in Farm Seen show the happy couple on or beside large shiny tractors. I have yet to see a wedding scene in a flower garden or beside the still waters of a stream or lake. Oh, yes, there was one by a lake. It was the photo of our wedding taken two years ago in September. I wanted to see if the magazine would publish non-farm wedding photos. They did. My wife and I are standing beside an oak tree on the lawn of our cottage house overlooking the pristine water.

I am always amused by the many pictures I see of the newly joined couple, and their pals, flanked on a polished tractor, or on the steps of a combine or in a manure spreader. For goodness sake, what are the brides thinking?

There were a few I had to cut out and save. One couple is standing in front of a parade of spiffy John Deere tractors led by a huge green combine. I counted eight double-wheeled tractors in the parade.

Another wedding photo shows two huge tractors – a John Deere and a Case/IH – back wheel to wheel. The groom and his entourage are on and standing beside one tractor and the bride and her friends are on the other. Young women are standing on the tires.

Not all wedding photos feature $150,000 tractors. Newly-weds are pictured on restored tractors, in manure spreaders, up a few rungs on a cement silo, up beside decorated large round bales of hay or straw, beside weathered barns and so on. There's one of a couple standing beside a long wire fence.

The magazine's editor-in-chief commented in his column some years ago about all the wedding pictures with fancy tractors. He said farmers love their tractors and their large equipment. They will find any excuse to be in it. He wrote: "And yet the tractor is a fixture at many weddings. Maybe that's just the way it has to be. For the young brides who become old marrieds with children in a few years will tell you, with various degrees of resignation, that they should have seen it all coming. They become widows to the cab come planting and harvest. It really is the competition for a young woman's time," he wrote.

Did that stop the wedding tractor pictures? Scare the brides off the large horsepower beasts? I thought young women would never send another picture in to the magazine that showed them even near a machine. Not so! Some weeks it's wedding week in the Farm Seen. Almost all the wedding photos are taken on the farm. Those red and green tractors are very popular with young farmers.

It's wonderful free advertising for the tractor manufacturers and the dealers. In a few years we might see the proud parents displaying their offspring in Farm Seen – on the tractors, maybe.

Maynard van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) is a farmer and agricultural writer in eastern Ontario.

News

Women deserve better than abortion:

How pregnancy centres make a difference

Jenna Craine

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia – Endometritis. Uterine perforations. Cervical injury. Acute hematometra. Saline poisoning. Anxiety. Depression. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Suicidal thoughts. Mortality.

These are just a few of the physical and psychological side effects of abortion. Although the rhetoric surrounding the abortion issue has framed it as a matter of "choice," many women are not fully informed of the dangerous consequences of abortion. This lack of information is essentially neglect of women and their unborn children, making it extremely difficult for women to make the best choices.

Willa London is the Executive Director of the Pregnancy Care Centre in Halifax, a not-for-profit organization that aims to assist pregnant women and their families in a Christian, pro-life atmosphere. She has held this position for two decades, after personally witnessing the damage abortion does to a woman.

While London was working as a nurse in the psychiatric ward of a hospital, a patient escaped and threw herself off the hospital roof in a suicide attempt. The patient survived but was paralyzed from the neck down. In the emergency room, London recalls, the medical staff were puzzled by the patient's refrain of "It hurts." Given the severity of her injuries, she was not able to experience pain. Eventually it became clear she was referring to her heart – to the extreme psychological pain from having had an abortion. London to this day is haunted by the memory of the patient stating, "If only someone had told me . . . ."

Not just a woman's issue

London keeps that memory with her as she meets with young women in need of support during their pregnancies. She aims to tell them what positive, life-affirming options they have, so they never feel the need to resort to abortion. Although the centre is unabashedly pro-life, it is also decidedly pro-woman. As London states, "[the mother] needs to understand she has value and importance, and that her decisions will impact her life."

Besides offering one-on-one counselling, the Pregnancy Care Centre offers a variety of other services such as free pregnancy tests, parenting classes, mom-and-baby programs, maternity clothes and full layettes for new moms. Instead of merely focusing on saving unborn babies, the Pregnancy Care Centre serves mothers long after their children are born, with some clients returning when their children are two and three years old. As London says, "we'll follow them as long as they need to be followed."

"...the Pregnancy Care Centre serves mothers long after their children are born..."

Despite the emphasis on assisting women, London rejects the rhetoric surrounding abortion nowadays which suggests it is simply a "women's issue." She points out that it is an issue which affects all of society, particularly the fathers of these babies. Recently, London met with a man and woman, 17 and 16 years old respectively, who were contemplating abortion. The young man remained silent during most of the meeting until she spoke to him directly and asked him what he wanted. He began to weep and said, "I don't want her to kill our baby." His girlfriend, shocked, asked why he had kept silent. "I didn't feel like I was allowed to speak up," he said. The couple decided against abortion and are starting parenting classes soon.

Praying for the root of the problem

The Pregnancy Care Centre serves over four hundred women a year, relying on financial and material donations to keep in operation. London emphasizes that their work depends on their faith in God. "No matter what I say, I'm never going to change [the mothers'] minds," she says. "That's the Holy Spirit's work." In fact, she stresses that "prayer has changed many, many situations."

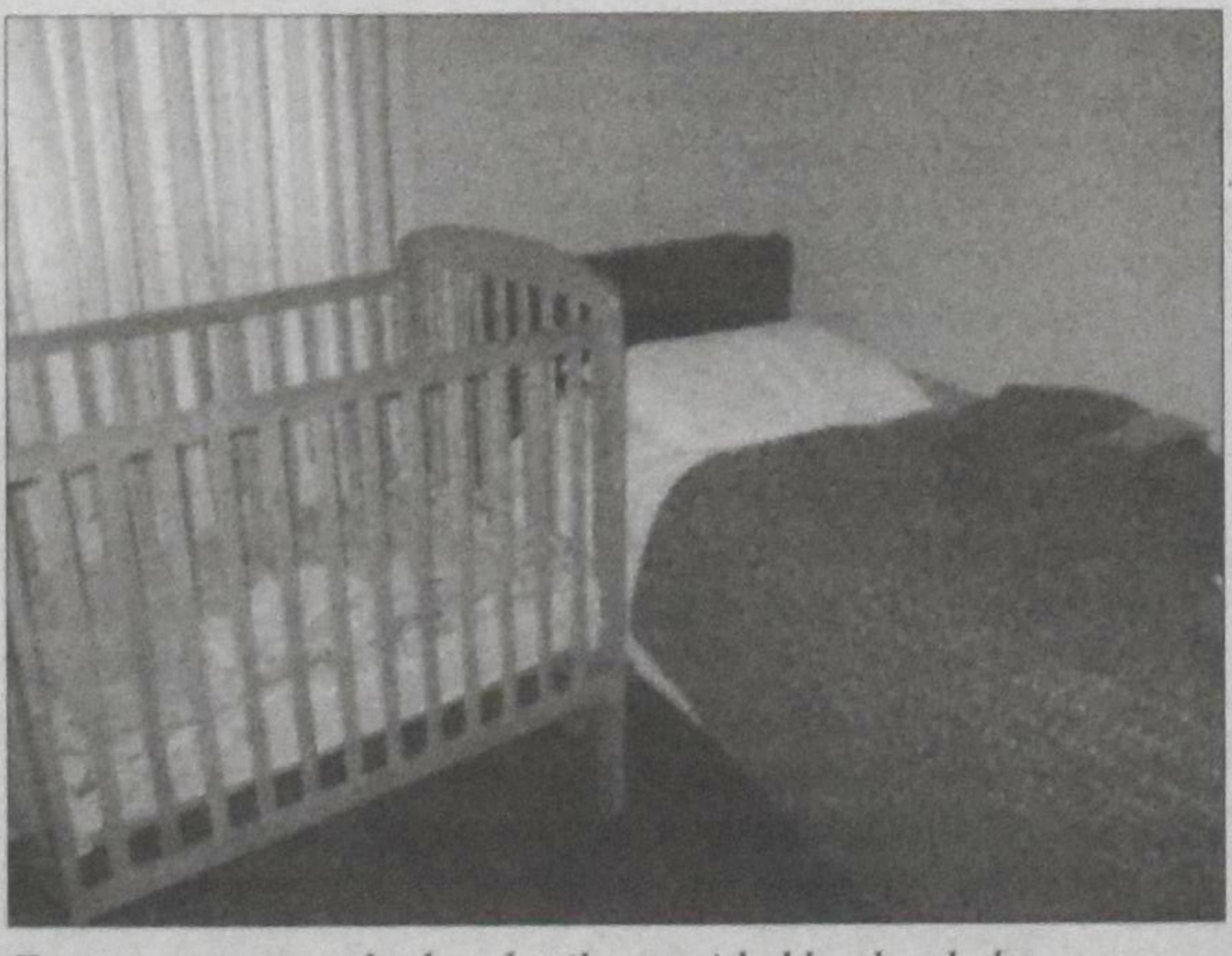
A few months ago, she met with a young woman in great distress who appeared resolved to abort her baby. In a different province from her family, she felt she lacked the necessary support. When London suggested perhaps a church community might help, the woman said she was not involved in any church. The door was open to talk about faith, so London asked her what God thought of all of this. The woman responded, "He doesn't like me. He put this child in me and I'm going to take it away." As though these words were revelatory to her, the young woman was then able to identify what she would need to carry her baby to term – proximity to her family. London arranged for the young woman to return to her home province.

Prayer is essential to the work of the Pregnancy Care Centre, but so is volunteering and supporting the organization financially. Most cities across Canada have a Pregnancy Care Centre or organization similar in outlook – such as Birthright – and all could use the support of committed pro-life people to help in the work of enabling women to choose what is ultimately best for everyone: life.

Jenna Craine lives in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia with her husband, Patrick, and baby, Noah. She is currently putting her B.A. in English to good use, by reading, and re-reading, "The Very Hungry Caterpillar".

Centre *continued from page 7*

people affected by them, but there are common threads in the Centre's response: while a woman may be referred to the Centre by a doctor or other social service provider, it must ultimately be the woman's choice to come for help. Women who call the Centre for help are encouraged to put together a "Safety Plan," which includes collecting important documents and giving duplicates to a trusted friend, getting a bank account which is not shared with the abuser, setting aside extra clothing and car keys, and sometimes creating a code word which will tell children to leave the house or to call 911. When a woman arrives at the Centre, on-staff counselors immediately assess her needs, and offer shelter, protection, and counseling at no cost. As Verburg notes, "we start where she's at. The goal is to empower women to make positive choices for their lives and the lives of their children." It's important to allow women to make decisions for themselves and for Centre staff to maintain a non-judgmental atmosphere and provide a physically and emotionally safe space. The Centre exists for the hundreds of women who have found refuge, compassion, and a new start behind its tightly closed doors.



Emergency space, bed and crib, provided by the shelter.

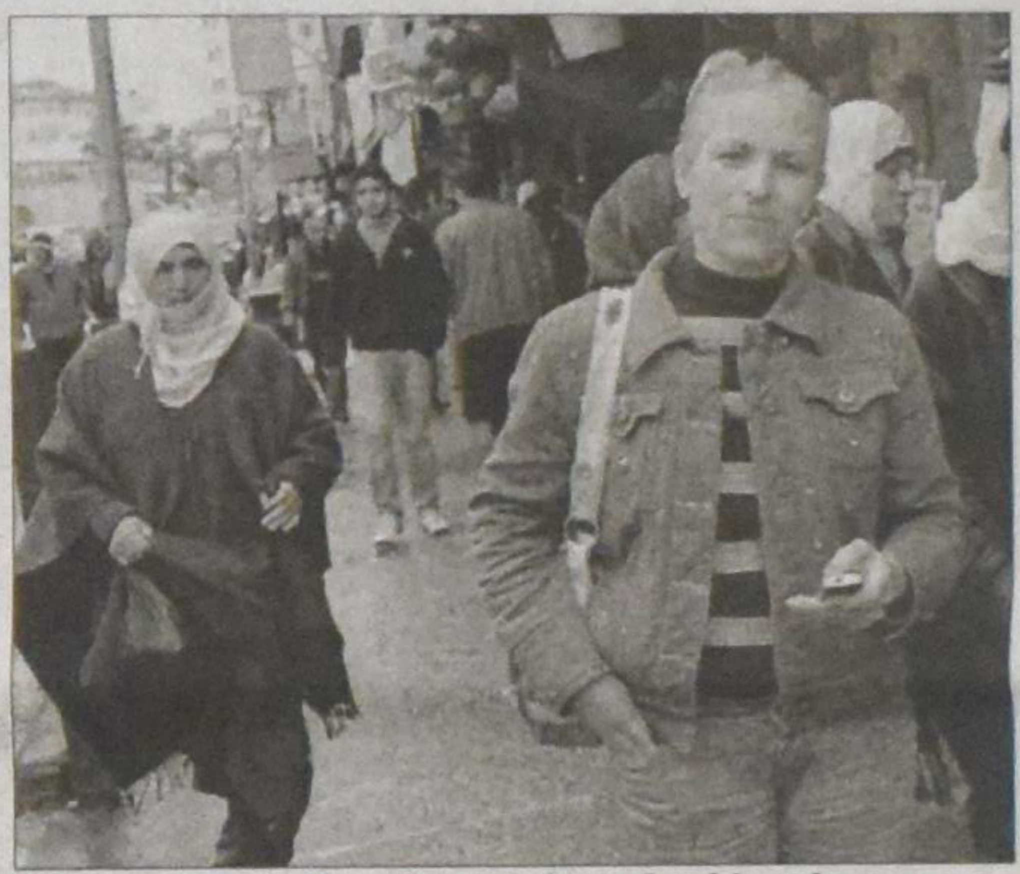
Anita Brinkman is a part-time tutor and freelance writer from Chatham, Ontario.

Why the West Bank won't crown a Miss Palestine

Joshua Mitnick (CSM)

RAMALLAH, West Bank – The idea to mount the first-ever Palestinian beauty pageant was part political statement, part feminism, and part personal fantasy. When marketing entrepreneur Salwa Youssef began planning a Miss Palestine contest late last year, she knew she was pushing the boundaries of social convention in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where women often wear head scarves in public in deference to traditional Islam. Since then, she's been denounced online as unreligious and unpatriotic. Meanwhile, the Palestinian government forced her to postpone the competition from the original date of Dec. 26 with no word yet on when she'll be able to hold the event.

"I need more freedom. To be a woman here, you are under control," says Ms. Youssef, who heads her own advertising firm in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "We cannot talk, we cannot choose, we cannot do anything we like. Maybe I would like to be Miss Palestine."



Palestinian Salwa Youssef has had her beauty pageant plans stymied.

Youssef also envisions the pageant as an international demonstration of Palestinian normalcy, a counterweight to images of bombings and violence that have become part of the Palestinian campaign for sovereignty.

Contestants will be judged on modeling traditional Palestinian clothing. The bathing-suit competitions that are a staple of many beauty contests will be left out of the pageant – a nod to traditional mores in Palestinian society.

A recruiting campaign at Palestinian universities and colleges across the West Bank prompted dozens of inquiries about participation. But many of those who expressed interest later demurred because family members discouraged participation, says Youssef.

"Religion does not allow women to come out in front of an audience and portray their beauty. For women, it shows openness to the point of rudeness," says Murad Sodani, the secular editor of the culture journal *Al Shuara*. "In spite of the openness of Ramallah, tradition doesn't allow it."

That isn't necessarily the rule across the Muslim world, as pageant winners from Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Turkey participate in international competitions. But in the Arab world, such contests are more rare. Even the secular government run by PA President Mahmoud Abbas is sensitive to the criticism of religious and cultural conservatives.

Heeding the call to 'Feed my sheep': Three Canadians who follow God

Heather Plett, director of resources and public engagement, Canadian Foodgrains Bank; writer and artist

Stephanie Tombari

Meet Heather Plett at her Winnipeg office, and you'll be welcomed by an articulate and confident leader. Meet her in cyberspace, and she's fumbling for words.

"I've always been a writer, but I was really intrigued by this whole blogging thing," says Plett, director of resources and public engagement at Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and the writer and artist behind *Fumbling for Words*, an online blog and writer's community. "It's amazing once you get onto the internet and Twitter the kinds of communities that can be built."

"I grew up in a small town where if you needed help you went to the neighbour," explains the mother of three and member of Good News Fellowship Church in Winnipeg. "We just don't do that anymore. I feel like the internet has taken the place of coffee break at the neighbours. It's a form of community. It can't replace in person community, but a person – especially a busy woman in leadership – needs that kind of support system, and I've found that online."

And being in charge, she says, can be isolating at times. "Not everyone will respect or value your leadership," says Plett, who was named Manitoba Communicator of the Year in 2009. "Not everyone will jump on the bandwagon when you have something to give. It can be hard not to take it personally. Sometimes there just aren't deep connections between you and the people you lead. At the end of the day, I have to step in as leader and trust that I have the right skills to do the job and to move forward in the right direction."

Some of her sense of direction comes from meeting women around the world who are taking charge of their communities despite the condition of their lives.

"I've met women in India who are dedicated to rescuing children out of sex slavery," says Plett. "They absolutely move me, and they're living in very poor conditions themselves. Of course there's poverty, but I see such incredible strength. That's what I come home with."

"I've met so many women who have great capacity and skills, but don't trust themselves," Plett adds. "They haven't learned to step into their own capacity and run with it. Sometimes when there is the most poverty, they have nothing to lose so they go for it, as compared to those of us who are over privileged. We have a lot to learn from the women I have met."

But it is through her art and writing that Plett best expresses the lessons of her life so far.

"I absolutely love creativity and teaching workshops and have seen women who are transformed by their creativity for value in their life and their spirituality," says Plett. "I value things that are creative and worshipful. Painting is my worship time and my spiritual time. It's how I connect to God."

Ida Mutoigo, director, CRWRC

Stephanie Tombari

It's been said that "behind every great man is a woman." But with women like Ida Kaastra Mutoigo at the reins, it's time to get the saying right: behind every great leader, there is God.

"Leadership in general demands that we have a sense of how God is at work and the forces that affect the overall mission that God asks us to address," says Mutoigo, director of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), a relief and development organization based in Burlington, Ont. "The advantage that we have as Christian leaders is that we have the Holy Spirit as a force of discernment."

But being a female leader in a male-dominated culture – which is often the case in overseas development work – requires patience and tenacity. "When I look at my work in Uganda, it was very challenging in terms of men and women relationships," recalls Mutoigo, who worked with CRWRC in Africa for 15 years before taking the director's position in 2006. "I had the advantage of being an expat, so my value as a leader was higher. But because I was a woman, and a single woman, I would go to government offices and they would ask me where my husband was. They couldn't fathom that I would have that kind of authority."

That struggle for recognition of authority still exists in Canada as well, sometimes within our own church communities. "One thing within the CRC context is that often as leaders of an organization we gain a voice when we speak from the pulpit," explains Mutoigo. "But there are still a fair number of churches that are not comfortable with women speaking from the pulpit (unless they're ordained). We can make some more profound statements when we speak from the pulpit."

And gender inequality, says Mutoigo, is a factor in the overwhelming poverty experienced by the world's women. "Many cultures still value men as superior to women, and that plays a very big role in contributing to the global issues today," Mutoigo affirms. "Education is so important for women. When you're valuing men more than women, the men will have the advantage of going to school, using up what little resources the family has available."

But as CRWRC director, Mutoigo is reminded daily of the gifts of healing Christian organizations can provide, to men and women alike: "As Christian agencies, we have the ability to address the emotional needs that people have, to give them a sense of encouragement and to give them not just the dimension that "I care for you" but that "God cares for you."

Stephanie Tombari is a free-lance writer in Burlington, Ontario.

Mavis Etienne, Bible translator; clinical supervisor at the One' to:kon Treatment Services; Member of Aboriginal Council of EFC.

Stephanie Tombari

Mavis Etienne has a strong heart. With it, she loves her people. But above all, she loves God.

"The Bible is a road map to heaven, but also God's love letter to us," says Etienne, of the Kanehsatake Mohawk community near Montreal, Quebec. "When we pray and open the Bible it is God's mouth."

Speak with Mavis about her work translating the Bible into her native language, and you may find yourself wishing you could read the Bible in Mohawk too.

"I felt it was important for our people to hear God's words in their own language, because Mokawk is the language of the heart," Etienne explains. "It is an expressive language about what you're feeling."

"John 3:16 says 'for God so loved the world, he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.' In the Mohawk language it says 'He only had one son, but he wasn't stingy. He gave that son so that we would have everlasting joy."

Etienne, a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Aboriginal Ministries Council and a key negotiator for the Mohawk Nation during the Oka Crisis of 1990, comes from a long line of translators: her grandmother, mother, and sister were all involved in translating Christian verse and song to Mohawk.

It's no easy task, says Etienne, with no real timeline: "It's a process where you translate to Mohawk first, then you do the English back translation, and then our professors review it in Hebrew and Greek, and then translate to Mohawk again to make sure that it flows. And then we publish it to audio CDs." The project is largely sponsored by the Canadian Bible Society.

Etienne is also a strong supporter of the prolife movement. As clinical supervisor at the One' to:kon Treatment Services in Kanehsatake, she is witness to the personal struggle that often accompanies the pain of abortion. "A lot of them turn to booze and drugs to numb the pain, because there's someone missing at the dinner table," she explains. "As First Nations people, we describe the seven generations coming, but people are being aborted, and we won't have those people coming. We are destroying our people and those generations."

Despite the racism her people have experienced, Etienne stays convicted in her task to translate every word of the Bible into Mohawk. "We do it because we love the Lord, and we want other people to know him via his word."

Church

Canadian Pentecostal plays Olympic multi-faith role

VANCOUVER – David Wells is general superintendent of the 230,000-member Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and chair of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). Wells was also the multifaith chaplaincy co-ordinator at the recent winter Olympic Games.

In that position he organized the efforts of 40 diverse clergy from five religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism. The chaplains held worship services, meditation sessions, prayers and offered one-on-one counseling to any of the 5,000 athletes who wished to participate.

David Wells.

Wells admitted to the *Vancouver Sun* "with a laugh" that Pentecostals are "not recognized for working in interfaith" organizations, the paper reported. That's no doubt why observers who picture Pentecostals as all fire-and-brimstone and speaking in tongues said they were surprised at the role Wells was given. The job became particularly difficult when Wells was thrust into responding to the tragic death on opening day of 21-year-old Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili.

The primary church in Georgia is Eastern Orthodox, so Wells had to hunt for Orthodox priests who could offer solace to Kumaritashvili's distraught Georgian teammates and the athlete's visiting family and friends, reported the *Sun*.

Most declared themselves Christians

Even though many Winter Olympic athletes come from highly secular European countries, Olympic administrators discovered that most athletes declared a "religious loyalty," and among that large majority, 70 per cent identified themselves as Christians, Wells told the *Sun*. As a result, 28 of the 40 clergy who served in the two Olympic athletes' villages were Christians – mostly Catholics, mainline Protestants, evangelicals or Eastern Orthodox.

Eight per cent of athletes declared themselves to be Muslim, eight per cent were Buddhists, while Jews and Hindus comprised much smaller percentages. Only 12 chaplains came from the athletes' countries of origin; the rest were from Canada, mostly from B.C.

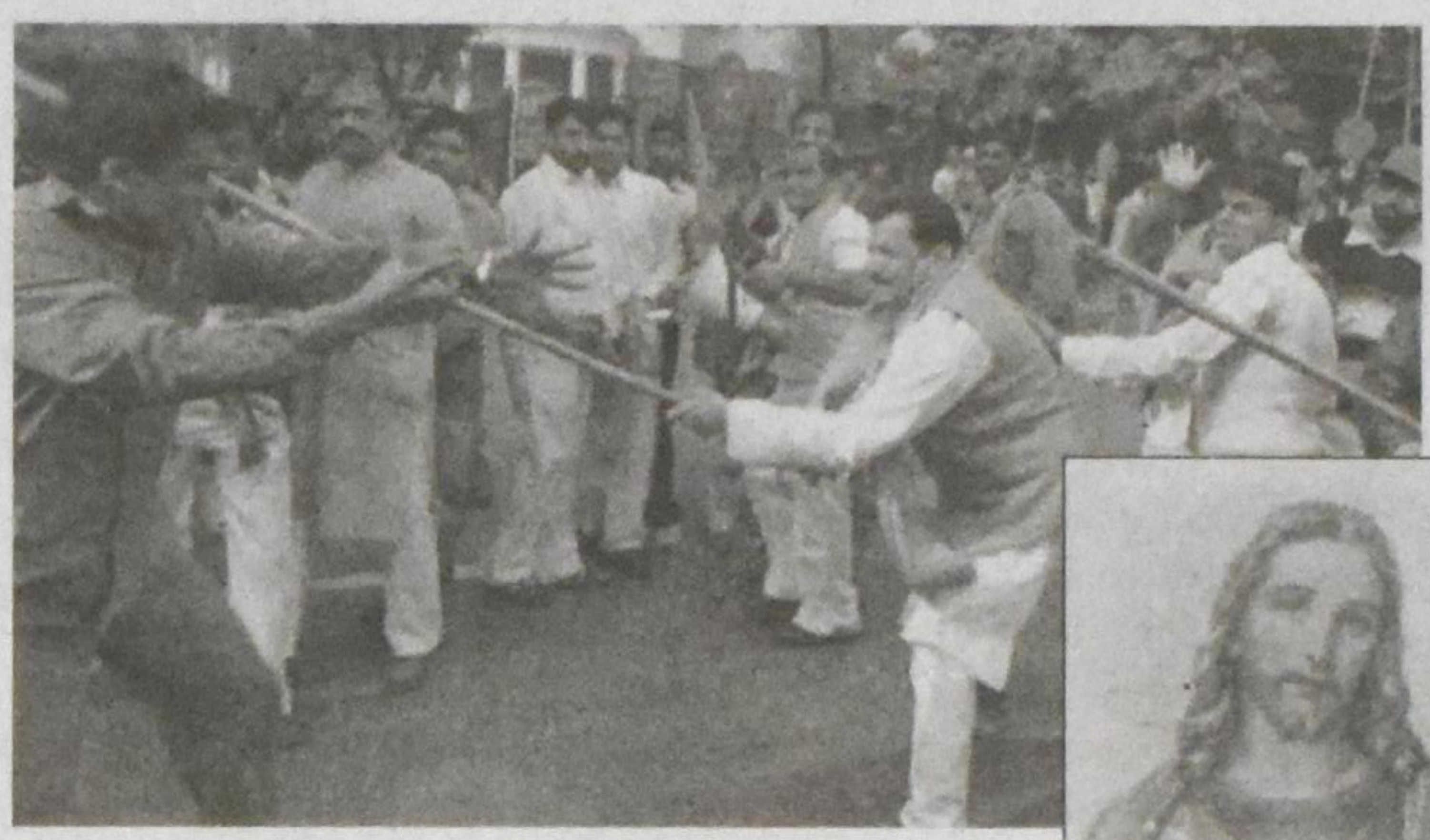
"With his vast experience in Olympic chaplaincy, Wells has become prepared for skeptics' questions about athletes who might take advantage of chaplains' services to pray to God solely to win a medal," wrote *Vancouver Sun* reporter Douglas Todd. "That is not what most athletes want, Wells said. The closest most Winter athletes come to praying for victory in a race is to ask God for help in 'doing their best' or 'to not perform half-heartedly.'"

Athletes also pray that any anxiety they feel will dissipate, said Wells. They're looking for inner strength, the more so when dealing with a death like Kumaritashvili's. Wells also noted that some Christian Olympians would talk of their participation in terms of wanting "to bring honour to Christ" through their skiing, sliding or skating.

Punjab: Blasphemous image causes Hindu-Christian clash

JALANDHAR, India (AsiaNews) – Authorities in Batala, a town of Punjab, have partially removed curfew after clashes broke out on February 20 between Hindu extremists and the Christian minority.

The violence was sparked by the publication of a cartoon with a picture of Jesus raising a beer in one hand and holding a cigarette in the other. The chief minister of Punjab condemned the blasphemous image and promised an "iron fist" against anyone who "foments sectarian hatred." Meanwhile, Bishop Anil Couto, Bishop of Jalandhar, invited the faithful "to peace and brotherhood."



Violence on the streets of Batala (above) and the image of Jesus, which first appeared in school books.

The cartoon, produced by a publisher in Delhi, has sparked protests from the Christian community of Batala, a town in the district of Gurdaspur in Punjab. On February 20 the city streets were the scene of violent clashes between Hindus and Christians who wanted the closure of shops and businesses. Activists of Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Shiv Sena – Hindu extremist groups – waged a guerrilla war on the Christians, injuring 10 people, damaging several shops and burning the Salvation Army Mukhi Fauj church, the city's oldest and best known.

Don't 'appreciate peace'

To stem the violence, local authorities imposed a curfew which has since been lifted. A police official said that they wanted to give people the possibility to "to leave their homes for shopping or other necessities." He added that "the level of alert" remains high to prevent new clashes.

Parkash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab, condemned the offensive image of Jesus and pointed a finger at "those who do not appreciate peace" and foment sectarian hatred. He adds that the police have received well-defined guidelines to "punish those guilty of sacrilege."

Mgr. Anil Couto, Bishop of Jalandhar, appealed for calm and brotherhood. The prelate called the faithful to practice the teachings of the Gospel, promoting peace and forgiveness, but at the same time pointed out that too often "provocative actions or images" wound the soul and the religious feelings of Christians. He invited the faithful to "be proud" of their religion, while not forgetting the message "of peace and love brought by Jesus Christ."

Even some Hindu organizations condemned the insulting image that portrayed Jesus drinking beer and smoking. They called for the arrest of those who would hurt the sentiments of Christian community.

Catholic Athletes for Christ urges virtue instead of sexual license

ALEXANDRIA, Virginia (CNA) – Reports of post-competition partying and condom hand-outs at the recent Olympics showed the need for Catholic athletes to be grounded in their faith and the need for the sporting world to recover the idea of athletics as a "forge for virtue," the head of a Catholic athletes' organization has said.

During the Olympics, MSNBC's "Today Show" cited event organizers' distribution of 100,000 condoms. The show also recounted off-the-record rumors of liaisons between residents of the Olympic Village as evidence of "hot nights" at the two-week long international event.

In response, Catholic News Agency sought comment on the spiritual dangers and benefits of sports from Ray McKenna, president of the Alexandria, Virginia-based Catholic Athletes for Christ.

While Olympians may have a "play hard, party hard" reputation, McKenna said athletes' behavior differs with each person. Gossip about their pastimes is a "real danger," in his view, and detracts from the story of a sport.

Be grounded in your faith

He encouraged Catholic athletes to be grounded in their faith and to engage in prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments and spiritual reading. They should also have a "discipleship relationship" with a spiritual mentor to help combat the dangers of off-the-field activities they know to be wrong.

> **The virtues of the Olympic model – fraternity, goodwill and teamwork – are praiseworthy.**

Asked whether the self-control of sports is related to self-control for the sake of moral and spiritual integrity, McKenna gave a "clear and definitive Yes." He said, "Faith can inform sports, so that one's personal faith can be beneficial for one's sports life."

Discipline is very valuable in one's spiritual life and in sports because it cultivates the virtues of dedication, determination, constant practice and repetition, McKenna said.

One central aim of Catholic Athletes for Christ, he reported, is to tell athletes "be good in your faith, be good in your sport." He encourages athletes to stay bonded with friends of similar faith so that they can share their struggles and can be better disciples.

He cited a quotation of Pope Pius XII, who said that sports "develops character, makes a man courageous, a generous loser, and a gracious victor."

McKenna says it's unfortunate that people now associate sports with vice. The virtues of the Olympic model – fraternity, goodwill, and teamwork – are also praiseworthy. McKenna added that sports and athletes' "heroic efforts" have been the vehicle used to overcome some "real, terrible social problems" such as racial discrimination.

Catholic Athletes for Christ encourages athletes in their spiritual formation, McKenna reiterated. The organization frequently works with the Vatican to help ensure access to the sacraments and to Mass and Bible studies during major sports competitions, including the Olympics. The group also advocates better access to clergy for other Christians and members of other religions, so that no athletes are impeded from practicing their faith.

Education

U.S.: Christian educators barred from opposing anti-religious court order

SANTA ROSA CO., Fla. (Christian Post) – A U.S. federal judge has turned down a Christian educators association's motion to argue against an anti-religious and allegedly unconstitutional consent order imposed on a Florida county school district.

In a 35-page Feb. 19 ruling U.S. District Court Judge M. Casey Rodgers asserted that the U.S. Constitution obligates Santa Rosa County School District officials to ensure that teachers and other staff do not "inculcate public school students with religion." Therefore, Rodgers ruled, the Christian Educators Association International (CEAI) had no valid basis for seeking to have the consent decree ruled unconstitutional. She rejected the CEAI's motion to intervene in the lawsuit filed last year by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) against the Florida county school district.

Daniel Mach, litigation director for the ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief, insists that the ruling "safeguards religious freedom for all in the Santa Rosa County schools. As the court concluded, the consent decree appropriately protects both aspects of the fundamental religious liberty enshrined in the Constitution: the right to exercise one's faith and the right to be free from government-imposed religion."

The CEAI and the Florida-based Liberty Counsel – which filed the motion last July on behalf of CEAI – did not immediately comment but they previously asserted that the consent order was overly broad because it essentially bans all employees from engaging in prayer or religious activities, whether before, during, or after school hours.

No hint of 'religion' allowed

"The ACLU's consent order broadly defines prayer, school events and school officials so that employees who bow their head or fold their hands, pray over meals during their lunch, or voice agreement with another's religious discussion at any time on school property or at any school event can be found in contempt of court," the Liberty Counsel said after it filed CEAI's motion.

Furthermore, when private third parties use school facilities for after-school religious events or church services, no district employee on his or her own private time may participate or communicate agreement in any prayer or religious discourse, even if he or she is attending the event voluntarily, outside of school hours. "The terms of the consent order violate the free speech and free exercise rights of CEAI members, both in their capacities as employees of the School Board and as private citizens," the Liberty Counsel said. "The order also forces CEAI members to infringe upon the rights of students and other third parties."

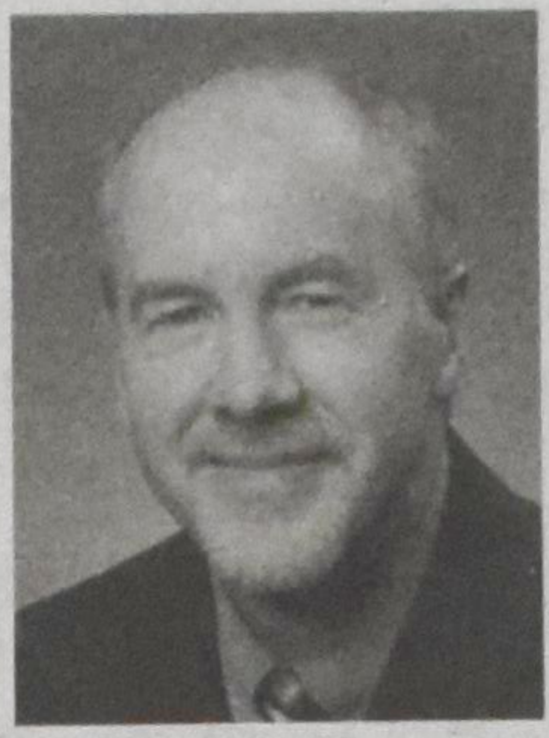
The controversial consent order came about after the ACLU filed a complaint in August 2008 against the school board for Santa Rosa County, accusing the district of sponsoring prayer at school events, orchestrating religious baccalaureate services and "proselytizing" students during class and extra-curricular activities. Without any legal argument or briefing, the judge signed the order, which also bars school officials from "orally express[ing] personal religious beliefs to students during or in conjunction with instructional time or a School Event."

The Liberty Counsel later argued that the order is so broad that it unconstitutionally infringes on the rights of teachers, administrators, and students. As a result, the counsel decided to represent faculty, staff and students of the school district – particularly certain members of the CEAI who are employed by the Santa Rosa County School Board and are opposed to the consent order.

Established in 1953, the CEAI is a non-profit religious association whose mission is to "serve the educational community by encouraging, equipping and empowering Christian educators serving in public and private schools." The CEAI has historically encouraged its members by informing them that they do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse door and that schools are not "religion-free zones."

Redeemer University College appoints new president

ANCASTER, Ont. (RUC) – Dr. Hubert R. Krygsman has been appointed as the third president of Redeemer University College. Currently the associate provost and director of the Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, Krygsman was given an initial five-year appointment which will take effect on June 14, 2010. He will succeed Justin Cooper, who served as Redeemer's president for 16 years. Redeemer was founded in 1982.



Dr. Hubert R. Krygsman

Ray Pennings, chair of Redeemer's board of governors, says that Krygsman is a good fit for Redeemer in that he understands "the two pillars of Redeemer's mission": teaching and research. He pointed to Krygsman's role in revamping the Dordt core curriculum, his leadership of the Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service, his authenticity, his vision for Christian higher education and his enthusiasm.

A homecoming

Krygsman grew up in southwestern Ontario, so coming to Redeemer will allow him to return to Canada after two decades of working in the U.S. "I am deeply honoured and excited to be part of the Redeemer community," he said. "I am committed to continuing Redeemer's collaboration with neighbouring institutions and colleagues, the greater Hamilton community and a growing community of supporters and students across Canada. I look forward enthusiastically to opportunities for developing the Redeemer community and expanding its impact for Christian higher education and service in Canada, and more globally."

Krysgman obtained a B.A. in history and philosophy from Calvin College in 1984. He completed an M.A. in history at the University of Calgary with a thesis on the theology of George Grant. His Ph.D. is from Carleton University in Ottawa, with a dissertation on "Freedom and Grace: Protestant Thought in Canada 1920-1960." His research and publishing have focussed on modern Protestant Canadian history, on academic structures and curricular design, and on the relationship between Islam and Christianity.

Krygsman feels that although Redeemer is young it has earned a reputation for excellence which makes it an attractive institution to join. "Redeemer University College is the work of a very dedicated, visionary and growing Christian community, and ultimately, I believe, of God's providential care," he said. "Redeemer is one of few Canadian institutions that offer a comprehensive range of bachelors programs in the sciences and liberal arts that are taught from a holistic Christian perspective and that equip students for engaging every aspect of our culture in grace-filled service to God's Kingdom." He added, "In its nearly 30 years, Redeemer has established a strong record of high quality education and scholarship, and community cooperation and service."

Hubert Krygsman and his wife, Nancy, are pleased to be moving to the Hamilton area where they have relatives and will be closer to family.

Hebrew University archaeologist unearthed fortifications built by Solomon

JERUSALEM – An Israeli archaeologist announced on Feb. 22 that ancient fortifications she and her team recently excavated in Jerusalem date back 3,000 years to the time of King Solomon and support the biblical narrative about the era, the Associated Press reports. Archaeologist Eilat Mazar calls her find "the most significant construction we have from First Temple days in Israel."

If the age of the fortifications is correct, the find would support the view revealed in the Old Testament that Jerusalem had a strong central government under Solomon (and during part of David's reign before him). Solomon, particularly, had the resources and manpower to build massive fortifications in the 10th century B.C.

Archaeologist Eilat Mazar showing off the dig site.

Scholars who dismiss the correctness of the biblical record dispute that. They insist that both David's and Solomon's reigns were largely mythical and that there was no strong government in that era. But Mazar says her find "means that at that time, the 10th century, in Jerusalem, there was a regime capable of carrying out such construction." Based on the location and Mazar's estimated age of the fortifications, she believes that Solomon had them built during his reign over ancient Israel.

The fortifications, including a monumental gatehouse and a 70-meter long section of an ancient wall, lie just outside the present-day walls of Jerusalem's Old City, next to what Jews call the Temple Mount and Muslims call the Noble Sanctuary – the site of Solomon's magnificent temple.

That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, rebuilt, renovated by King Herod some 20 years before Jesus was born and then destroyed again by Roman legions in A.D. 70. The compound now houses two important Islamic buildings, the golden-capped Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque.

Archaeologists have excavated the fortifications previously, first in the 1860s and most recently in the 1980s. But Mazar says her dig was the first complete excavation and the first to turn up strong evidence for the wall's age: a large number of pottery shards, which archaeologists often use to date what they find.

Story

a Mildred Budge adventure

Naptime on the prayer chain

Daphne Simpkins

Like phone calls that happened before eight in the morning or after ten at night, when the phone rang on a Sunday afternoon during universal-after-morning-church-and- before-vespers naptime, it had to be an emergency or a wrong number.

When Mildred Budge's phone rang Sunday afternoon, it was not a wrong number. It was Anne Henry calling by special request for one of their own: a request so urgent that the prayer for mercy needed to be said before Monday morning or even evening worship.

"Liz has asked," Anne Henry said, clearing her throat even as Mildred Budge grasped her own in a habitual mannerism of stroking her throat when she was concerned about what she was going to have to say – or hear, "that we pray that a man in her neighborhood who rides a bicycle will not fall in love with her."

"She has asked for prayer for that?" Mildred clarified, as her hand moved to her forehead to rub the place between her eyes where the memory of sleep still lingered. Her heart was racing, and there was a shimmying feeling in her legs because the phone ringing sometimes caused a start of anxiety: *Who was hurt? What had happened*?

And now this emergency activation of the prayer chain during the Sunday afternoon naptime – which everyone respected – was being interrupted by Liz, who was afraid a man on a bicycle was going to fall in love with her the next day. Did love happen that fast? If so, what was Liz afraid of? Surely after three marriages and three funerals, Liz knew how to handle a man on a bicycle.

"Will you call your people and pass along the prayer request?" Anne Henry asked, her voice a study in neutrality.

Anne Henry didn't judge others; she simply didn't. Mildred admired Anne Henry.

However, something in Mildred balked.

"Are you still there?" Anne Henry asked. Mildred heard the head of her Sunday school class rustle a piece of paper. Her friend had other calls to make before she could lay her head down for an afternoon snooze.

"I am here," Mildred said with a sigh. She eyed the yellow sofa where she had recently been noodling in a quasi-slumberous state that was the tenor of Sunday afternoon where resting was the occupation of those who submitted to the commandment to rest: naps were good.

"You've got Fran and Belle on your list."

"I do," Mildred confirmed. "And, let me get it straight: I am supposed to call and pass along the request that a man on a bicycle NOT fall in love with Liz."

Still fresh from reading the long list of the very sick that was passed out churchwide that morning to the entire congregation, Mildred could not help but think that there were more urgent needs of the congregation. The chronically ill. The homebound. The expectant mothers. The soldiers and their families whose names were listed on the same sheet.

Fearing that she could no longer sound unaffected by the content of the prayer request, Anne Henry nodded yes into the telephone. Mildred heard Anne Henry's silence and respected her all the more for it. "I shall pass along the request," Mildred Budge said with finality.

The phone clicked discreetly in her ear, and Mildred inhaled of Anne Henry's decorum. Then, she punched in Fran's number and reported the prayer request. "Liz is afraid a man on a bicycle is going to fall in love with her."

"I've heard," Fran said. "Poor thing. Hers is a difficult life to live."

"Indeed," Mildred agreed.

"But while I have you on the phone, perhaps you would remember that I am singing a solo this evening at church and I am – well, this is silly I know – I'm afraid of cottonmouth. You know my mouth goes dry when I get nervous."

"Do you want me to pray that you make spit?" Mildred asked, and she felt Fran grin.

"That would be a most excellent prayer," Fran said, clearing her throat.

Mildred hoped Fran would not sing herself hoarse before the evening hour of worship.

"'Twill be done," Mildred said. "Get some rest. I have to call Belle."

"Would you mind calling Carol while you're at it? She's on my list, but I don't have time to talk to Carol this afternoon because I must practice my solo."

Mildred eyed the couch longingly. The Bible verse repeated itself in her memory: *if a man asks for your shirt give it to him; if he wants you to walk a mile, go twain.* "Yes, I'll call Carol. I'm waking people up."

"That is the nature of love," Fran replied mysteriously, and hung up.

Mildred called Belle next.

"I heard," she confirmed while Mildred wondered why they needed a formal prayer chain – the grapevine seemed to work pretty effectively. "I'll pray for him," Belle promised sunnily. It was her signature mood: sunny.

"Fran's singing tonight. You might remember her too," Mildred added. Fran was her best friend, and the prayers of a righteous woman – or two – affected much.

"Fran will be all right," Belle said dismissively. "I'm going to the church early and place a glass of water for her on the organ."

Everyone who knew Fran knew she had dry mouth when she sang. Glasses of water abounded in the name of Jesus when Fran sang.

"Good," Mildred said, hanging up.

One more call to make.

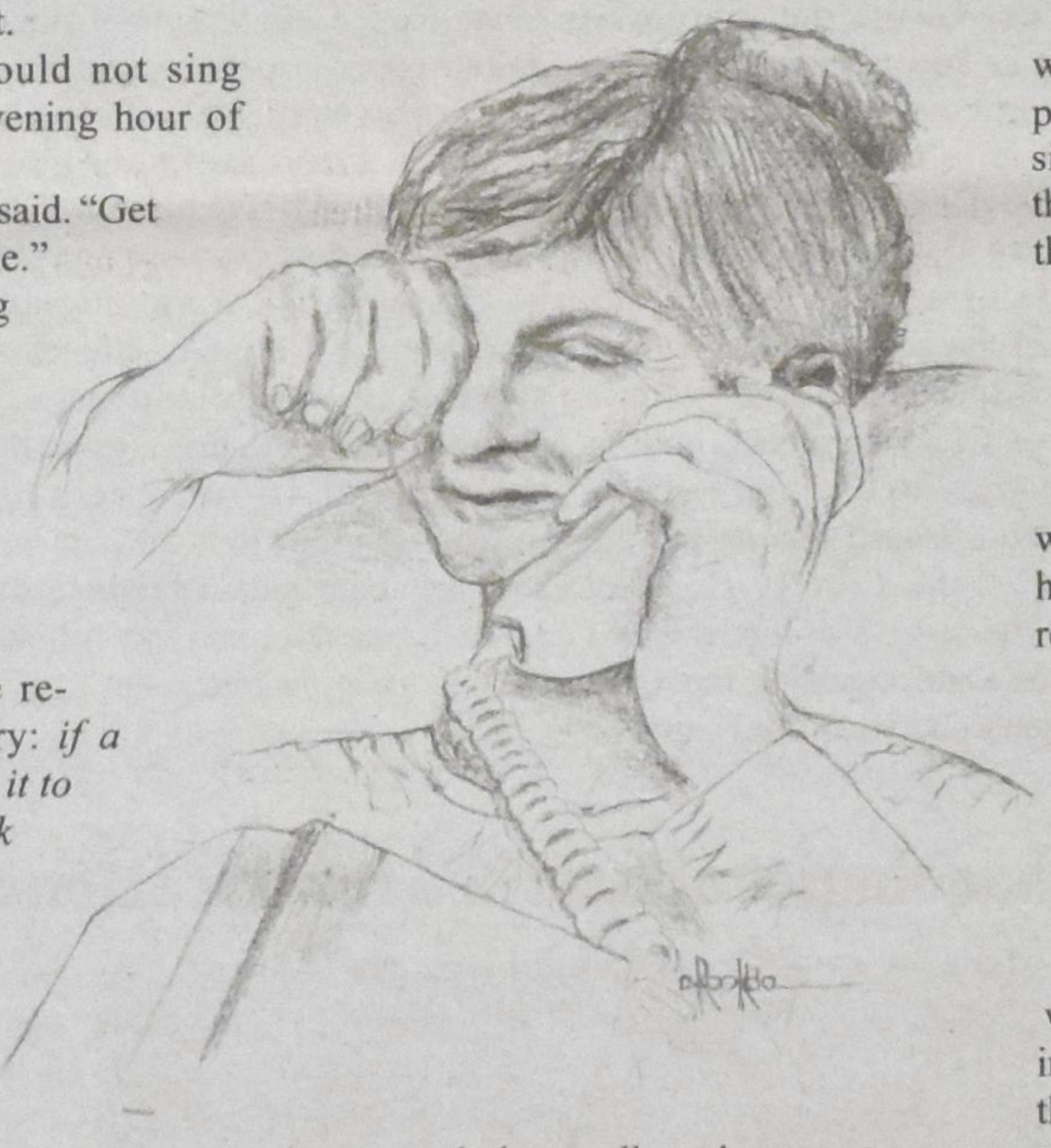
Mildred dialed Carol's number, and before Mildred could explain why she was calling, Carol burst out with her news. "I don't care what the emergency is. Mine is worse."

Mildred came to full attention. Carol was a very good link on the prayer chain, and her blast of anxiety was out of character.

"I was just speaking to Genie over at the nursing home, and I told her that if she wants a ride to church tonight I'll come get her. But she's got to use that lighter aluminum walker, because that one she prefers with the built-in seat is too heavy and hard to fold up and fit in the trunk. It sprang back at me like an accordion last time and almost hit me in the face. It's worse than wrestling a bear."

Mildred cleared her throat to remind Carol that she was calling officially as an activated member of the women's prayer chain.

"I mean it, Millie. Genie's got to make allowances for us. We're all older than we've ever



been, and that walker she uses to carry her stuff around is too much for us."

Mildred tried to interject, "Liz called…."

"Pshaw. I heard about that. Isn't that Liz bragging that she's about to have another man on her line, like we aren't already convinced that she can get a man. Some women have that knack. I'm the one who's got real trouble. Pray for me. Mildred, I've got an ugly attitude about helping others, which is a gross failure to fulfill the second commandment. I need prayer, and I need it now."

Mildred pretended her hand was holding a pencil and she mimed writing the words, *I've got an ugly attitude about helping others, and I need prayer.*

"After I told Genie that walker was too much for us, she got mad at me and told me that the walker she took to Sunday service was her business. 'Well, when you need help from others, it's not all your business,' I told her, but she slammed the phone down, and now she's probably going to be distracted by what I said, try not to use any kind of a walker – you know how she tries to do that sometimes? – then, she'll fall down, break a hip, and die, and when that happens, it will be my fault."

"No, it won't," Mildred argued. *Sparrows fall; God knows.* Mildred's memory pulsed inside, faintly.

"There ought to be a rule about waking everybody up on a Sunday afternoon for a dumb reason like Liz's. Who's in charge of screening prayer requests?" Carol demanded, changing subjects now that her conscience was clear.

"No one," Mildred replied faintly. Her hand mimed writing the words in air: *No one.*

"Well, off the record, and I know we're not supposed to gossip during the prayer chain calls, but I feel sorry for that man on the bicycle. Liz has been a widow three times. Men who marry her seem to die."

Mildred's spine elongated. Her shoulders went back. The room grew brighter. "I suppose we could see this as a life and death situation," Mildred agreed softly, as the idea that Liz, in her way, might be trying to save the life of a stranger.

"Pray for me, Mildred. I'm having a hard time loving others," Carol repeated, and hung up.

Miss Budge returned to her sofa and lowered herself thoughtfully. She wondered about all the prayer requests she had heard over the telephone. All the prayer requests she had heard in Sunday school. All the prayer requests that were too tender to utter and were swept under the prayer clause "unspoken prayer requests."

She wondered who the man on the bicycle was and how did a woman know when a man on a bicycle who was supposedly going someplace else was about to stop on his journey and fall in love with her. The answers were distant; the paradoxes inscrutable. Yet Miss Budge's spirit was moved.

Activated, with no one needing the shirt off her back or her legs to walk a second mile, Miss Budge recalled what she had heard and imagined what she could not see. Her mouth began to move, and she prayed for the unspoken requests of Anne Henry and for Fran and Genie and Liz and Carol, and, lastly, the man on the bicycle who, if the prayers on the chain worked, she would most likely never meet.

Daphne Simpkins (DaphneSimpkins@Prodigy.net) has been writing "The Adventures of Mildred Budge" for the past two years. Before she became Miss Budge's biographer, she wrote a memoir of her father's journey through Alzheimer's disease: The Long Good Night

On Women

Ellen Vanderwerf

What I love about the women I love (in no particular order):

I love the way she makes me feel at ease in her home with her natural friendliness. She is a comfortable woman.

I love how she tells the story of the wide-mouthed frog to young children.

I love how she gets so involved in things that matter to her and how she starts crying when she talks about it because of her love for the people she works with and her passion for Jesus.

I love how unflappable she is. Nothing fazes her; she just calmly listens and smiles as though she suspected it all along and loves me more for it. She helps me feel comfortable with myself.

I love how she gets up and dances just because she likes the song that is playing.

I love how she can wear old clothes that are falling apart and still make herself look beautiful in them.

I love her long, curly blonde hair. I wish I could play with it all day long, but she rarely lets me touch it.

I love how she is so often dressed up whenever I see her, yet she never makes me feel as though I should have dressed up too. I love how she handles lack of energy when she is sick. She calmly accepts it and tries not to resist.

I love how strategic she is when she plays cards with me... even though she often wins.

I love how passionately she tells the stories of her life. She actually re-enacts whole situations for me right before my eyes.

I love the way she smells.

I love how she invites me in even when her house is not perfectly clean and in order. It makes me feel better about my own home.

I love how she looks me in the eye so intently sometimes while we are talking.

I love her blunt, kind honesty, her shocking cynicism, her gentle voice.

I love how much energy she has to do so many good things for our community and for our congregation.

I love the spirals and waves she places in her gardens with stones or seeds or growth or shells or marbles.

I love the way her carefully groomed dreadlocks feel when I touch them.

I love how she is so often busy with something, either in the back room of the thrift store, or in the kitchen making pies, or running a food stand – and she always has a huge smile on her face and laughter bubbling out of her heart.

I love the way she sometimes tells me about her own problems just to teach me how to deal with mine.

I love how she makes oatmeal for her family every single morning.

I love how she looks when she is playing the piano.

I love how intense and sincere she is, eyes watering, whenever she talks to me.

I love the scarves she wore on her head while her head was bald during her treatment. I loved the feel of her bald head.

I love when she is ready to drop everything so that she can go for a drive with me and talk and look around.

I love her smile; her crooked teeth. The way her eyes crinkle.

I love how exuberantly generous she is with her words, her attitude, her time, her cooking, her home, her belongings.

I love how fast she drives and how she laughs at the behaviour of the children.

I love how it feels when she hugs me.

I love her smile of love for me whenever I walk into her presence.

I love the feel of her kinky, tight curls.

I love how accepting and encouraging she is about people. She always fights to believe the best of people no matter the buzz or the evidence.

I love the doodles she creates in the margins of her notebooks.

I love her hunger for deeper knowledge and deeper understanding. Her table is filled with intriguing books and journals because she is always thinking about stuff, learning, studying.

I love how she gushes over newborn babies.

I love how at home and welcome I always feel when I am spending the night in the small home that she lives in with her dog, her cat and her four kids.

I love how much time she gives to the youth group and how she always seems joyful about it.

I love how she writes me long letters full of information and love.

I love her eyes.

I love how creative she is with her home decorating and the cards she makes.

I love how whenever I am with her she always makes me feel like I am a person she really loves to talk to. I like it when she cries because she can talk to me again.

I love how she struggles to forgive ... I love THAT she keeps struggling to do it, even though it can be so hard to do.

I love digging in her garden with her, munching on the vegetables while we talk about our lives or big ideas.

I love how approving and encouraging she is. I never feel like I have to pretend to be someone I am not when I am around her. I sometimes fear that I might have displeased her, but she always shows me that she loves me just the way I am.

I love the way she moves and dances when she is embarrassed about something.

I love how visible her loving heart is when she leads worship and gives the children's message.

I love the way her face looks when she sings.

I love sitting near her in church because she sometimes quietly shares her heart with mine in the minutes before the service begins.

I love the way she treats her husband.

I love how joyfully she plays the organ.

I love what she said to me when I was preparing to move my family out to the edge of the country into the unknown: "God is already there."

I love how she prays.

I love how she humanizes her pets.

I love the many ways she shows me that she loves to be with me.

I love the clothes she creates out of thrift store finds with her sewing machine.

I love her hair. It is shoulder length, and she pins one side back behind her ear. Sometimes she wears it back in a loose bun.

I love her strange low voice.

I love how she can be such a calm, good mother to so many children.

I love the food that she cooks. She is so gifted in the kitchen; it is a wonderful thing to eat her food. I loved it when she brought my family dinner when there was sickness.

I love how she can talk for hours and hours and never once gossip about someone else.

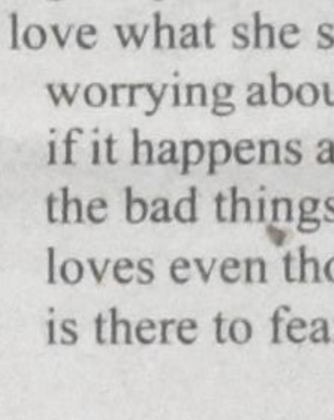
I love what she said to me a couple years ago when I was worrying about "it" happening again: "So what? So what if it happens again? Is God not bigger and stronger than the bad things that happen? Is he not still the God who loves even though life gets difficult? What is there to fear?"

Ellen Vanderwerf currently lives in Duncan, BC with her family.

Trafficking

Little girl,
with eyes the cobalt blue of Canadian skies,
with hair the chestnut hues of a sika deer.
Oh, little girl,
whose nimble mind stretched toward
learning's prize,
whose pure, shy smile promised
friendship's cheer.

Oh, sweet little girl, where have
you gone?



If only there is someone,
anyone to cherish the day of
your birth,
to show you that to God
you are of inestimable
worth.

--Chris Ahlemann

Chris Ahlemann is a freelance writer living in Des Moines, Iowa. She has had some 400 pieces published in magazines and newspapers of various Christian denominations. She and her husband have two grown children and one grandson.

Family

From Toddlers to Teens
by Denise Dykstra

Communication: 1,000 words paint a picture

I don't like generalizations. Too often they lead to stereotypes and prejudice. But there's one generalization I think we can embrace – one generalization I believe we, as parents, should even strive to authenticate.

Have you ever heard it said that women use 20,000 words a day? That women speak three times as much as men? That's the generalization I'm referring to. The one that essentially says women talk a lot. Why do I think this is something for us to aspire to? Because talking is communicating, and good communication is an important parenting skill.

Keep the channels open

The other night a friend and I went out for dinner. Over the course of the evening I talked way more than she did. To her credit, she listened while I prattled on (listening is also an important part of communicating), but she didn't speak much herself. And when she didn't respond, I didn't think she understood me. Even worse, I didn't feel like she really cared about what I was saying.

Whether we're parenting toddlers or teenagers, we want our children to feel heard, understood and appreciated. In order to achieve this, we need to be talkers as well as listeners. Good communication is the key to building and maintaining relationships with our kids.

Mothers and daughters talking

Talk with your sons and daughters. Let me repeat that: talk with your sons and your daughters! Over and over and over again. Probe the brains of your kids every single day. Ask nonjudgmental questions. Get as much information as you can in order to understand what they think.

By knowing *what* your children think, you can better influence *how* your children think. You can have an effect on the choices they'll make in the future. By recognizing the kinds of thoughts that are floating around in your kids' heads, you can help your children be discerning. You can steer them to a path they can stay on for the rest of their lives. "Start children off on the way they should go," it says in Proverbs, "and even when they are old they will not turn from it." (Chapter 22, verse 6)

Don't miss the moments

Let's say you're talking with your five-year-old daughter about house fires. In the course of your conversation you find out she thinks the safest place to go if the house is ablaze is her bedroom closet. You now have the chance to warn her of the danger of such a strategy and to show her where she should head to be truly safe.

Or maybe it's your teenage son you're talking to, and you're discussing sexuality. While you're conversing he tells you he doesn't think there's anything wrong with looking at pornography. You now have the opportunity to explain to him how pornography victimizes and objectifies women, how the bodies portrayed are unrealistic, how the material is addictive, and so on.

I could give more examples, but I think you get the point. Communication leads to knowledge and knowledge to an opportunity for instruction.

How do you ensure you're communicating well? There's no perfect formula. But there are lots of things to keep in mind when you're attempting to get your kids to open up. Be interested in what your children have to say, acknowledge that you understand, ask questions, answer questions, be encouraging, be respectful, don't interrupt, give your full attention, don't be critical, don't try to solve everything, don't lecture, be honest. And keep talking. All the time. At every opportunity. Start a conversation in the swimming pool change room, the Tim Horton's drive-through, the movie theatre before the show begins. Talk in the morning, the afternoon, the evening and before you go to bed. Talk, talk, talk. I promise you it will pay off.

"May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."
Psalm 19:14, NIV)

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) is a stay-at-home mom of five kids ranging in age from 15 to four. She lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

Looking for light

We had anticipated this day for more than a year. As I parked the Jeep, Jack wondered aloud what it would be like to undergo anesthetic, something he'd never experienced. I considered yet again the logistics of how to manage the farm while he recovered. When would the surgery take place – during spring planting or fall harvest? Would we be shipping chickens or getting ready for new ones? How long would he be laid up?

No matter. God would provide. We were both certain of that. We longed for the time when Jack would be free from the back pain that had plagued him for nearly a decade.

He had persevered through most of the aches and pains. But for the last couple of years he visited the doctor frequently for refills of the Tylenol 3 prescription. On a few occasions he literally could not get out of bed in the morning.

He tried anti-inflammatory medications, herbal remedies and natural supplements; visited the chiropractor and massage therapist; took physiotherapy; and tried wearing a back brace. Nothing helped.

The doctor ordered x-rays and an MRI. The likely culprit: a herniated disc. He booked an appointment with an orthopedic surgeon for February 22, 2011. We pleaded for an earlier date. The time was cut in half – only 13 months before Jack would see the specialist.

In the meantime we heard success stories from so many people who had undergone the surgery and been given a new lease on life. Jack kept working, taking the painkillers and pulling for the day when he would get his operation. There was light at the end of the tunnel.

A shock

Now we sat side-by-side in a tiny examination room. We knew our friends and family continued praying, even as we waited.

An intern began the preliminary exam. He poked and prodded Jack, then directed him through various movements. He scribbled furiously and asked a dozen questions about the pain. Finally he said, "And what would you like us to do for you?"

Jack raised his eyebrows. The answer seemed obvious. "I would like to have surgery so I can be rid of the pain," he said.

The young doctor added to his notes, then stood and said, "I'll be right back with the doctor."

Jack looked at me. "Do you think he believes me?" he asked.

I patted his knee. "Of course he does."

A few minutes later the surgeon introduced himself and shook our hands. Then he said, "There is no surgery for what you have."

I wonder what our faces looked like at that moment.

He went on to explain that Jack has degenerative disk disease – osteoarthritis in the spine. He showed us the MRI, pointing out significant damage to the two bottom discs in Jack's back.

"If it was your knee," said the doctor, "we could replace it. But that isn't possible for the spine."

We listened in stunned silence as he talked more about the disease and offered his best advice on how to cope with it.

In the waiting room we greeted one of our friends who had arrived to offer her support. Fighting tears, I reiterated the news we had just received.

On the way home we tried to digest the implications of this new scenario. We called the family to fill them in. That evening I sent out a mass e-mail to tell our friends. I suddenly realized that all the worry about getting through the surgery and recovery was totally pointless. I had been distracted by issues that didn't even exist.

We began discussing options, planning what adjustments we could make. One morning, after countless conversations on the same topic, Jack smiled and said, "You know, it seems I'm preoccupied with worry about the next 40 years or so and I've forgotten what a short time that is in the span of eternity."

His words hit home with me. Forty years or so – rather like the Israelites wandering in the desert. God had a purpose in that. According to Deuteronomy 8, he used the time to teach his children crucial lessons. And he was with them through it all.

It's been a month since we sat in the surgeon's office. Some days are better than others. But we take comfort in knowing God will accomplish his purpose in this wilderness too. After all, what's more powerful – light at the end of the tunnel, or an ever present pillar of fire to push back the darkness?

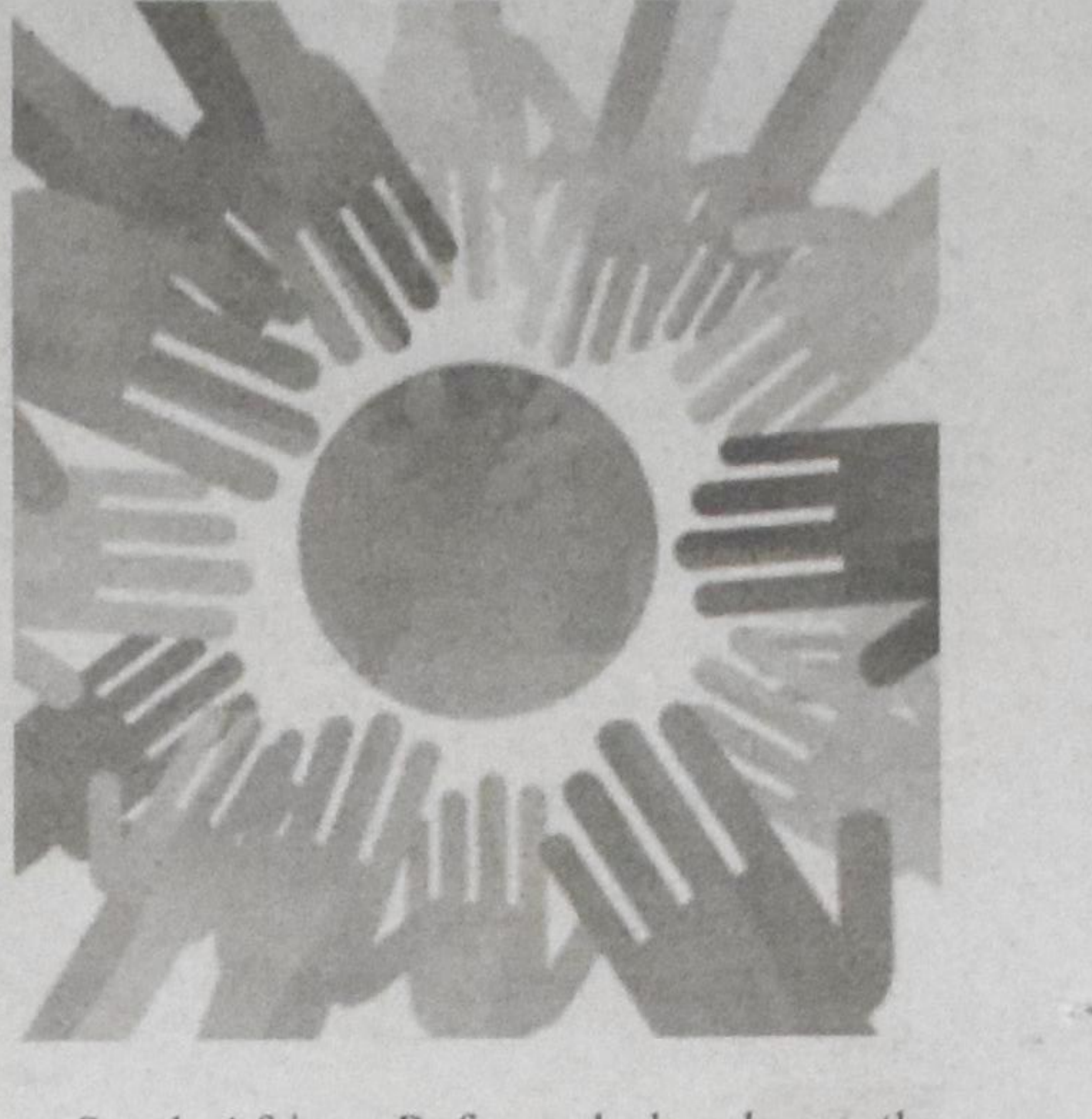
Heidi Vander Slikke (vanderslikke@everus.ca) lives in Harriston, Ont.

Debate

Belhar Confession debated

In 1982, a Reformed church in Belhar, a suburb of Cape Town in South Africa, wrote a confession of faith that focused on social justice issues that arose around apartheid. Since then, the Belhar Confession has been accepted by some African and European Reformed churches as equal to the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt and the Heidelberg Catechism. In July, the Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) accepted it as a fourth confession and the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) voted by 72 percent to propose the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth standard of unity at Synod 2012. Christian Courier *asked Dr. John Bolt and Shiao Chong to respond to the Belhar's consideration by answering six questions posed by the editorial team in a series of six features over the next three months.*

***Question 1:** Is the sin of racism and the persistence of poverty as discussed in the Belhar Confession as serious a matter for the Church to address as the sin of doctrinal heresy? Does the weight of the earlier confessions towards orthodoxy show a blind spot for the vital place of orthopraxis?*



John Bolt

I am grateful to the editors of *Christian Courier* for the privilege of participating in this dialogue on the Belhar Confession. I am equally grateful for the clarity of their first question since it brings the whole issue to light in a constructive way.

Is racism and the persistence of poverty as serious a matter for the church to address as doctrinal heresy? Clearly racism is a sin, as is indifference to the poor. Neither, however, are exclusive sins that stand out needing special attention. What if we were to ask the same question about other sins. Is abortion on demand as serious a matter as doctrinal heresy? What about drunkenness? Adultery and fornication? The persecution of Christians? Assisted suicide and the destruction of embryonic stem cells for research? Lists could be multiplied of sins and persistent social pathologies. Should the church then make a "confession" in which the evil of abortion and the willingness of Christians to support politicians who are pro-abortion are singled out as special sins that need to bring on the entire weight of ecclesiastical discipline?

My own view is that merely to ask the question is to answer it. Many of the CRC's "progressive" Christians who are quite in favour of the Belhar would not, I am quite sure, be happy campers if the CRC adopted a "confession" that made membership in and voting for the pro-abortion U.S. Democratic Party, not to mention being a candidate for public office under its banner, a censurable offense. Nor, as a matter of fact, would I. But then why would we do this for the sin of racism and "the persistence of poverty?"

Always with us

I must say that I find the reference to "persistence of poverty" rather telling. On what Scriptural grounds could one be led to think that poverty will ever be eradicated? Never mind that our North American definitions of poverty leave much to be desired – our "poor" are among the globe's truly wealthy. None of this is to diminish the horror and tragedy of the world's truly poor, who should move us to tears for their plight and inspire generous hearts. As I write this, the nation of Haiti is still trying to get from under the massive destruction of its major earthquake. The world must rush in with aid, and it is. Yet, does anyone believe that even if the United Nations mobilized a "fix Haiti from the ground up" version of the post-WWII Marshall Plan that rebuilt Germany and Europe, that the vast majority of Haitians would not be poor in tragically short order? The same thing could be said about HIV-AIDS. Does the persistence of a virtual HIV-AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa require a church confession? It is puzzling to me that the persistence of sin and brokenness is a "problem" that requires anything other than the gospel message of grace, forgiveness and hope. That is what the world needs to hear from the church.

"The poor you will always have among you." What our Lord intended with this statement was of course the reminder that we will always have an obligation to the poor, not that we could shrug our shoulders and adopt a "don't-worry-be-happy" complacency about poverty. What needs to be said here is that the church has no particular strategy or program to "fix" poverty or any of humanity's numerous maladies (racism, HIV-AIDS, polio, obesity, crime, war, pollution, health care, socialism) save the gospel itself. That's it: nothing more and nothing less.

Truth and conduct

So then, when framed this way, is it not obvious that a doctrinal heresy – denying the Trinity, the incarnation, the sufficiency of Christ's atonement or the full humanity of all people – that this is far more serious than the fact that sin and its brokenness persists in our world. The latter is no surprise and is the reason for the gospel in the first place.

There is one possible objection to the point I am making. When the CRC joined the World Alliance of Churches campaign to declare Apartheid a heresy, it insisted that what it was condemning was a *doctrine*, namely a doctrine that justified Apartheid. Well and good, let us concede the point. Such a doctrine *would* be a heresy because it denies the full humanity of some of God's image bearers. The problem is that no one has pointed to any official or unofficial statement or position of the Christian Reformed Church that reflects such a doctrine. In what seems like an act of desperation, some appeal to implicit (or so-called "institutional") racism because our actual social situation is not fully egalitarian when it comes to race (or gender). But, that of course, will not do because, like poverty, such inequality will always be with us.

So, then, should orthopraxis (right conduct) be a matter of confession at all? I don't think so. It is of course true that our Christian discipleship is a matter of obedient faithful conduct as well as confession of truth. Yet, confessions of faith are about the truth of the gospel, not about our conduct, which ever needs further sanctification. Inadequacies of conduct (again, ever with us) do not falsify the truth of the gospel, though they raise enormous questions of credibility about the gospel's messengers. On the other hand, once we falsify the message of the gospel, all the good conduct in the world will still send us to hell. We should speak to the world about conduct in a testimony; more on that next time.

Dr. John Bolt is a professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary.

Shiao Chong

In Galatians 2:11-21, the apostle Paul wrote about his argument with the apostle Peter. According to Paul, Peter used to eat with the Gentile Christians, but when certain people from James arrived "he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy" (Gal. 2:12-13 TNIV). Paul saw that "they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel," and confronted Peter in public about his behavior (v. 14 TNIV). The foundation of Paul's argument against Peter's action of Jewish-Gentile segregation (based on Jewish torah or law observance) was that all Christians, Jew and Gentile alike, are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, not by observing the Jewish torah: "We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ … because by observing the law no one will be justified" (v. 15-16 TNIV).

Notice how, for Paul, the great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith and not by works challenges the wrongful social practice of ethnic segregation. For the apostle Paul ethnic segregation is more than simply a social justice issue; it's rooted in doctrinal and salvation issues. Correct beliefs (orthodoxy) ought to lead to correct social practices (orthopraxis); justification by faith in Christ ought to lead to a community where "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28 TNIV).

The Belhar Confession also assumes this connection between beliefs and behavior. South African Reformed churches – the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – drafted and adopted the Belhar Confession in the midst of challenging apartheid in the late 1980s. Apartheid was not simply a social justice issue. It was a systemic injustice that was rooted in doctrinal heresy. In 1982 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) declared apartheid a theological heresy.

So, is apartheid as serious a matter as doctrinal heresy? The answer is "yes!" Because Christian or Church support for unjust social practices almost always has roots in doctrinal heresies. In the case of apartheid, the white Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa supported it or turned a blind eye to it due to theological errors. I don't have space here to dwell into what those errors were. The point is that the Belhar Confession is not simply dealing with social justice issues; it is also attacking doctrinal heresies that infect and influence churches to support (either by commission or omission) such injustice.

Historical precedent

Writing a confession in order to deal with social injustice is not simply a modern phenomenon. The Belgic Confession was written in 1561 in the face of Catholic persecution of Reformed Christians. It was sent to King Philip II as a means to petition the king to end the unjust persecutions. One reason, perhaps, why the Belgic Confession was harsh towards Anabaptists was to show to King Philip that unlike anarchists, Reformed Christians could live peaceably under a Roman Catholic government and obey its civil laws. This is maybe why the Confession's article 36 ended with the statement, "For that reason we detest the Anabaptists and other anarchists, and in general all those who want to reject the authorities and civil officers and to subvert justice by introducing common ownership of goods and corrupting the moral order that God has established among human beings." The Christian Reformed Church's (CRC) Synod of 1985, by the way, decided to remove this paragraph and placed it in a footnote. But for Guido de Bres, the author of the Belgic Confession, what some Anabaptists in the 16th century

Continued on p.20

Christ @ Culture
Lloyd Rang

The white glove treatment

Our mother did a lot of things that drove us nuts. When someone was taking a picture, she'd grab your face and squeeze your lips together. In many pictures, I look like the first prize in a trout derby.

She did that thing most mothers do – licking their fingers to wipe something off your face – which is fine, but not when you're sixteen.

Then there were the clothes that we liked, but she didn't. Like my Iron Maiden t-shirt with the severed heads that met with an unfortunate bleaching accident.

Those things drove us nuts.

But they were nothing compared to the white-glove treatment.

The white gloves

My mom's white gloves were not for going out. They were not for playful snowball fights. They were not for keeping handy in case the Queen of the Netherlands should drop by suddenly for coffee and *gebakkjes*.

Mom's white gloves were used for one thing only.

She would put them on, methodically and silently. She would walk into your room. And she would swipe them across the top of a picture frame and hold one smudged finger aloft like a CSI investigator.

And you'd have to start over again.

I can't speak for my four older sisters, but I know how that made me feel. Inadequate. Angry. And, above all, determined to win.

Because my mom did her room inspections with a gleam in her eye. And when she found dirt, she'd turn away with slumped shoulders and a disappointed sigh that could have won her a daytime Emmy Award for "best actress in a domestic drama."

I used to say that, for my mom's guilt trips, you'd better pack a steamer trunk – because you were gonna be travelling for a while.

So I devised a few tricks to beat the white-glove treatment.

First of all, I learned to put my things away, right away. If I took off a shirt, it went into the laundry. If I was done my homework – when I did my homework – I put it right into in my Adidas bag afterwards.

I kept a red feather duster in my desk to use on my model planes and ships. I Pledged the bookshelves once in a while, just to keep them neat.

So when my mom would tell me to clean my room – and then inspect it – I was always ready, and done quickly.

What I learned at school

I carried this habit into Redeemer College and grad school. I told my housemates that a little maintenance goes a long way to keeping a place clean. Pretty soon I was the designated vacuumer and duster.

But it didn't end there.

I remembered the effort my mom put into making dinner – and when I was in school, I wanted to enjoy a taste of home. So I called her to get recipes.

Before long I was cooking.

Some of those recipes called for fresh herbs from the garden. My mom was a champion gardener. So when I visited, I got cuttings and seeds from her.

Before long I was gardening.

And I had to wash my own clothes at university and press them for church. Because I didn't have a lot of money, I had to learn how to fix my clothes when they ripped. So my mom taught me how to do all that, too.

Before long I was sewing and doing laundry.

And slowly, something quite profound happened.

I began to cook – not just to survive or to feel at home, but to experiment with flavour. Not merely to make dinner, but to create a meal.

I began to garden – not just to save on herbs and vegetables, but to bring my home alive. So that when I walk out the back door on a Saturday morning to snip some basil for Greek omelets, I get to enjoy a little bit of God's creation in my own backyard.

And I began to clean – not to get rid of dust and dirt, but to clean away the stress of my day, to clear my head, to find peace and balance. One minute, you have disorder, the next you have order. One minute there is a spot, the next it is gone. It's so simple.

And I got to know my mother.

Do the gloves come off?

Our relationship changed from playful one-upmanship to talking about real, shared interests.

My mom was visiting recently and she said, "Lloyd, stop tidying up and fussing for a bit. Just sit down."

She told me she was worried that all those years of the white-glove treatment had turned my sisters and I into obsessive neat-freaks. Especially me. The "traditional" side of her wondered if I hadn't gone a little too far in embracing my domestic side.

And I held my mom's hand and looked her in the eye and said, "Mom, I love the feeling I get from looking around my house and knowing everything is exactly where it should be. Knowing that I can cook a good, healthy meal. You've raised a man who can do everything around the house from fixing the roof to putting on a button, and I like being that man. And I'm thankful."

Maybe that's the way things are meant to be.

Perhaps, as Galatians suggests, there literally is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

All I know is this: I am proud to be my mother's son.

And proud of my five-year old son, too, for something he said the other day: "Dad, when I grow up, I'm gonna do dad stuff, too. Just like you. I'm gonna cook, and clean and do dishes."

And I thought to myself, "Maybe. But first, let's see how you deal with the white-glove treatment."

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ont.

Serving fish soup in Honduras

Heidi Kerssies

March 8 is the International Day of Women, a day to celebrate women. Unfortunately, for many women life is not a celebration. There are many hardships, few choices and much pain. I do not pretend to share or understand that pain. I have lived a life of undeserved privilege. I have opportunities to study, to travel, to work in a profession that I love, to buy according to my needs and wants. My life is often one of celebration, not often one of hardships.

'Estoy fregada'

I spent about five years living in Honduras. Honduras is said to be a machismo society, a place where exaggeratedly assertive masculinity is displayed, a place where women are often silenced. This statement is, of course, a generalization, and it is not true for all Hondurans. Still, during my time there I became conscious of the status and situation of many Honduran women. A husband or son comes into the house and demands supper or an ironed shirt or a cold glass of Coke. The wife, the mother or the sister complies. Simple actions daily reinforce one's place in society.

For almost a year I lived with a close Honduran friend. She lives next door to her brother and his adult son. Their houses are mere meters apart, making it easy to call across from one house to the other. Every morning at around 6 a.m. the son would yell across, "Café, bos!" Literally, "Coffee, you!" Meaning make some coffee and bring it to me. My friend, his aunt, would obey. Perhaps it is easy to judge this situation, to see all the ways it could be different.

Let me share with you about a woman I greatly love and respect. Her name is Doña Teresa. She is in her early sixties. She has raised four children – one daughter and three sons. Her husband, Don Luis, is a difficult man. In his younger years he was often angry, sullen, controlling and hard to live with. As he aged he mellowed some but was still cantankerous. Then he began to show signs of dementia. Doña Teresa had to care for him – to bath him and dress him and feed him, all the while as he yelled and swore at her. She said to me once, "Estoy fregada," meaning my life is a mess. "My youth with Don Luis was awful and now I won't even be able to enjoy my old age because of him." She has worked hard all her life. She has had cancer and recovered. Recently she recovered from a ruptured appendix. Her life is not easy, and her choices are few. But this is not to be a pity piece about Doña Teresa. She has strength and courage which she daily displays. Spending time in her company is always a pleasure.

Dignity in the face of hardships and injustice

One day she related a most delightful story. She was recently married and just had one child, her daughter. Her brother-in-law had brought her some fish, and she decided to make fish soup out of it. She washed the fish and set it to cook in the soup pot – it was a huge pot as she was making a lot of soup. After it had been simmering for a while she lifted the lid to stir the soup. The pot was filled with black things, bugs that apparently had come streaming out of the fish's head. Startled, but very determined, Doña Teresa scooped out all the bugs and at mealtime served the soup to Don Luis, without ever trying a spoonful herself. Don Luis, we were led to believe, was none the wiser. She said that now when she cleans fish she puts on her glasses to make sure all is aright.

One Sunday, after she had healed from her ruptured appendix she came forward in church to share of God's

Continued on p. 20

10 women you should know

Brett Alan Dewing

5 female songwriters you should know:

Kendall Payne

If you've never heard Kendall Payne, you're missing out on some of the very best music being produced in the Christian scene these days. With her independent but commercial songs, she tackles issues of faith and pain and hope in a textured, lyrical voice. Best album: *Grown*

Sandra McCracken

I first discovered Sandra McCracken as "the wife of Derek Webb." After giving her music a listen, though, she soon stood on her own. McCracken's writing leans into the American past, ending up somewhere between country and folk while striving to emulate the great hymns. Best album: *Gravity Love*

Sarah Masen

Sarah Masen hasn't been on a record label for some time now, but she continues to create her signature quirky folk. Several excellent EPs are available from her website, www.sarahmasen.com, as well as at www.noisetrade.com, where you can also find McCracken. Masen's sweet voice and poetic lyrics demand repeat, almost meditative, listening. Best album: *Carry Us Through*

Patty Griffin

Patty Griffin is something of a songwriting legend, but so many people have never heard of her. Her songs have been covered by many artists, but you need to hear her incredible voice tell the stories. When her words, melodies and voice combine, she can break your heart a hundred times over. Her newest album, *Downtown Church*, is a collection of gospel numbers done in her warm, folky style. Best album: *Impossible Dream*

Jill Paquette

The Juno winner only put out one full album, but it's never far from from my earbuds. Her style isn't too different from what you'll hear on contemporary Christian radio, but there is a wonderful roughness to her writing that connects with the dark corners of a light-filled soul. We've been waiting for a new album for six years, but the old one never shows its age. Best (and only) album: *Jill Paquette*

5 female authors you should know

Marilynne Robinson

Pulitzer Prize winner Marilynne Robinson teaches at the University of Iowa and publishes very infrequently but with great success. Her novel *Gilead* should be read in every *Christian Courier* household. In it, a 77-year-old pastor looks back at his life in a small rural town. With beautiful passages that describe simple life and simple faith in tones of wonder, it will make you love your family and your God just a little bit more. Best book: *Gilead*

Carolyn Arends

Known worldwide as a singer/songwriter, the Abbottsford native is also a delightful and accessible writer. Her stories of everyday life crack open into beautiful portraits of grace and revelation. She writes columns and pop culture reviews for *Christianity Today* and maintains an insightful blog at angelwrestle.blogspot.com. Best book: *Living the Questions*

Leanne Payne

Theology has always been a man's game, but Leanne Payne brings a distinctly female voice to the bookshelf with her focus on listening prayer and the healing of emotional and mental wounds. With insightful analysis of gender and prayer, Payne's work is the best balance of psychology and divine revelation I've ever seen. Best book: *Restoring the Christian Soul*

Margaret Avison

Many Canadians likely read Margaret Avison's poetry in school. Described as "probably the most important English-Canadian poet," Avison has won two Governor General's Awards and the Griffin Poetry Prize. Her playful use of language and intense attention to image have illuminated a life of faith for millions who would normally write off a Christian woman. Best book: *The Dumbfounding*

Annie Dillard

For my money, Annie Dillard is the greatest writer of all time, male or female. Her body of work spans almost all genres, often combining them in beautiful ways. Her mix of fiction, nonfiction and poetry can prove dense, but her perfect command of language and honest struggle with God and pain lift the words to transcendence. Start with *An American Childhood* and work your way through her essays and finally to her classics, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* and *Holy the Firm*. Best book: *Holy the Firm*.

Brett Alan Dewing is co-editor of Christian Courier.

Who is this woman?

THE PUBLIC SQUARE
Harry Antonides

"Be quiet! It's my turn!"

Five simple words, spoken in Arabic on the Al Jazeera discussion program "The Opposite Direction" on February 21, 2006. But they made history and were heard all over the world, catapulting Wafa Sultan into the centre of a controversy that is of world significance.

Imam Ibrahim Al-Khouli was used to dominating the discussion about Islam, especially when interacting with women. He was dumbfounded when Wafa Sultan challenged his authority and demanded that he listen to her. As she explains: "Never in the history of Islam has a woman clearly and forcefully asked a Muslim man to be quiet because it was her turn to speak. Women in Islamic custom and tradition don't have a turn."

Many viewers have seen the video of this encounter since it was widely circulated with English subtitles on blogs and through e-mail. In 2006, *Time Magazine* included Wafa Sultan in a list of 100 influential people in the world "whose power, talent or moral example is transforming the world."

A disturbing story

She tells her story in *A God Who Hates*, and what a fascinating story it is. It is also a profoundly disturbing story that shines a light on the humiliation and systemic abuse imposed on women living in an Islamic culture.

Wafa Sultan was born into a Muslim family in Baniyas, Syria, in 1958. She saw firsthand the mistreatment of women that wrecked the lives of her grandmother and her own mother. Headstrong and determined to learn all she could, she vowed never to acquiesce to a life of virtual slavery in a male-dominated culture.

She saw how helpless women and even very young girls had been degraded and their personhood destroyed. Two sisters of her husband were forced into marriage at the age of eleven and thirteen. One of Wafa's nieces, a mother of four children at the age of 26, escaped her miserable existence by committing suicide.

One experience hit Sultan hard when she was growing up. She overheard her mother, in a joking sort of way, tell others that when Wafa was born, she and her husband were disappointed that the baby was a girl, and they were unsure what to name her. One of her uncles then told her mother. "Why don't you call her ... [a crude word for feces], it's the only name she deserves."

On graduation from medical school in 1981, Sultan became a doctor in a mountain village far from the centre of the country. She was shocked by the inhumane way the men treated their women in the workforce. Sultan was even more troubled by the widespread sexual abuse of women.

After completing her three-year term of service in that village, she left with a bleeding heart and "seething with fury." She had become a more experienced woman, "well schooled in the human rights abuses that took place in the society in which I lived."

She writes that an "oppressed and subjugated woman cannot give birth to an emotionally and mentally well-balanced man." She refers to a woman who stood before a television camera and told the world, "Three of my sons were martyrs and I hope the fourth becomes one, too…. My sons are now celebrating their marriage with their virgins in paradise."

The Path to Freedom

In 1988, she and her husband and two children immigrated to America, where she continued her struggle to be liberated from what she calls her Muslim birthmark. It was not easy for her to exercise her freedom to leave Islam. But to free her subconscious from the birthmark that had been imprinted on her was even more difficult. Or as she put it: "There is still a huge scar barring my way."

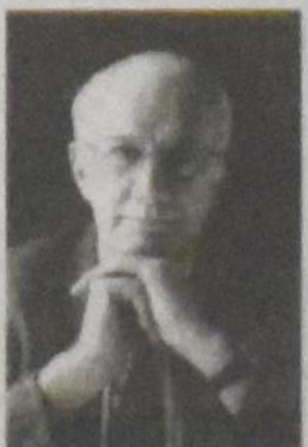
On the flight to America on Christmas day, 1988, she breathed this prayer, "Oh Lord, set me on the path to freedom, and I promise You that I will fight for the freedom of others." She writes that she left for America spurred on by a single aim:

To defend those Allah had cut down in size until they were smaller than flies. I had the aim and the will, but I lacked any clear vision or plan which would enable me to attain my goal. But, America re-formed me, armed me with knowledge, clarified my vision, and helped me to outline my plan to save those victims. I decided to bring 'Allah' to justice on criminal charges. (109)

A God Who Hates is indispensable for all who are eager to understand the most important challenge facing the free West. The author exposes in clear language, backed by real life experience and observation, the destruction of human relationships, wherever the teachings of the Koran and Muhammad are accepted as divinely inspired.

Above all, this book provides an intimate look at the author's passionate search for the true God who is loving and compassionate. It is my prayer that Wafa Sultan will indeed find the God who so loved the world that he sent his Son not to condemn the world but to save it. (John 3:17)

Read this book. Treasure it. And tell your children and grandchildren.



Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Reflections

Speak – Write
Paula Warkentin

Extreme brokenness encounters extreme love: *my journey through feminism*

Black, radical, lesbian feminist. If that introduction did not get your attention, then my attempts to jolt you into seeing my reality have failed.

Prior to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, I made a point of describing myself as written above, to pronounce my identity so that others could not define me. It was a way for me to say, this is who I am, whether you like it or not. From my point of view, I lived in a world that aimed to pretend I was not visibly different and the fact that I was a woman was no more relevant than the color of paint on a wall. But the truth as I experienced it was the exact opposite.

For reasons that are not uncommon to many first generation Canadians born to immigrant parents, I felt displaced. Faced with the irony of repeatedly being asked where I was from (when I was in the city, province and country of my birth) and simultaneously reminded that I was not a "true" West Indian (because I was not born in the country of my parents), I never felt I belonged. It was as though I was nonexistent, living in exile because I was affirmed neither here nor there. So being a Canadian was a label that I did not know how to acquire, nor was it anything I saw as tangible. All I knew was that I wanted to be accepted, to have a place to call home.

Two roads, one way

I was seated in my first Women's Studies course when the thing I so deeply longed for finally happened. Belonging! I can still recall the jubilation I felt hearing the voices of other women express their sense of exclusion, isolation and invisibility. Words like marginalized, oppressed and silenced were terms that were as familiar to me as salt and vinegar chips. They just went together. I could relate because I understood what was being spoken about firsthand. And I felt like I was allowed to hear and to speak the truth of my experience for the first time in my life and have it validated. Alas, I found an audience who would applaud the triumphs and mourn the trials that embraced my experience and quest for meaning, in being both black and female, in a world that seemed to have respect for neither.

The mere sound of their voices, speaking a reality that echoed my own, was like nectar to a bee. With the neediness of my eyes and ears wide open, I lapped it up. What I did not know was that I was walking into a movement of skewed vision and distortion – that would propel me in ways that fed my emotions of anger, discontent and sense of right to vindication. Before long, I was a publically outspoken, militant activist/feminist who sought affirmation in what would become a long term same-sex relationship.

Years later, filled with disappointment, disillusion and emotional holes – wounds gaping from excessive self-indulgence – I found myself standing at a crossroads. The intersection had two streets. One marked life and the other death.

Following Christ's relentless pursuit of me, I ran to him, and into the inexhaustible embrace of his arms. I was beyond broken, and my heart was ripped wide open.

Shortly after experiencing the forgiveness of my own sin, with a list that was lengthy and a heart that was heavy, I was entirely surprised to learn that I too needed to forgive.

The freedom and lightness I so longed to know was not just going to drop itself in my lap. I had a part to play in this "new creation" life experience as a Christian and a believer.

Not a movement but a stance

In re-discovering who I was by God's design, I entered a journey of hills and plains, mountain peaks and valleys, for a trek that no workout routine could equip me for successfully completing. This race was not for the swift, nor this battle for the strong, but for the one who was willing to be weak in order to find strength in Jesus Christ alone.

Becoming a disciple of Christ has required a daily willingness to re-learn what it means to lay down my life, to give up my rights and the insistent urgency of having my needs met at every whim, wish and demand. And it has not been terribly easy or possible without the love, support, correction and sound teaching of others – called my community.

Although important, finding a place to call home, having a sense of belonging and feeling acceptance no longer maneouver the chords of my heart forward. Instead, it is the love of Christ and the grace of God which has and is changing my heart – constantly challenging me to serve so that I may fully love and truly live.

Unselfish and totally healed, I am not. But having found THE BISHOP and LOVER of my soul, my heart is whole. I am newly free; I am full, each time I am empty and increasingly hungry to see many mouths filled. And today I rejoice, recognizing that my identity in Christ calls me **to the cross**: not to a movement, but to a stance that positions me to love in ways that are radical and extreme, which moves the heart of GOD.

Paula Warkentin lives with her husband and daughter in Winnipeg.

Two aspects of Lent (part II of II)

Frank Sawyer

Editor note: This is a continuation of an article in the February 22 issue.

Sacrifice

This painting of Abraham sacrificing Isaac is based on Genesis 22. This chapter tells us that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, "your beloved son." Abraham heads up into the mountains with Isaac, a donkey loaded with wood, and his servants to carry more supplies. Religious pilgrimage is not just a private affair. Abraham went through this test of faith in front of those he loved. However, Abraham and Isaac did travel alone together on the last day to the place of sacrifice. It is difficult to imagine ourselves in Abraham's place – and Isaac's place! – at this moment. But the story centres on the thought that God shall provide, and Abraham's faith is demonstrated when he says, "God himself will provide the lamb..." (verse 8). We cannot entirely imagine the drama of this, but Kierkegaard wrote a book on the event, called *Fear and Trembling*.

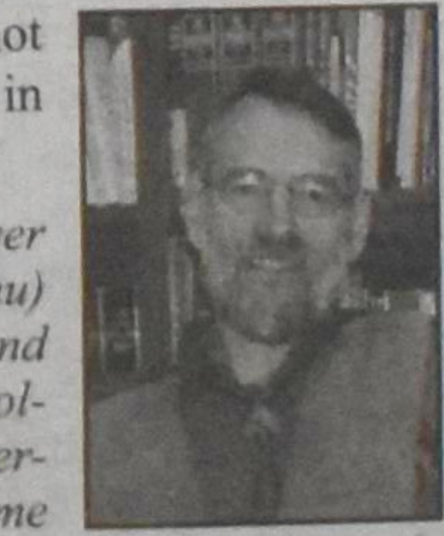
One could think of various ways to paint this story, and none of us would come up with the same way that Ferenczy did this. Thus the artist gives us a new look on this event. We read in Genesis that the angel commanded Abraham to halt – at the last moment, indeed! The artist shows the angel holding back Abraham's arm with the knife. The angel is painted in green to blend in with nature. It is natural for the supernatural to be present and to intervene. Indeed, the angel is in command.

Abraham is not wearing a desert robe like we might expect but is dressed in a black suit like an orthodox Jew of more modern centuries. When we look closer, we see that Abraham is wearing his Jewish prayer cap. (This does not show very well in some prints.) Here is the "father of believers" so firm in his faith that he is able to do his orthodox duty. God commands this! Yet the story also tells us that God can come with a new command at any moment, and we may need to revise our understanding of our religious duty. The sacrificial lamb was already provided, even though Abraham had not noticed this.

This brings us to Lent. During Lent we come to the amazing awareness that our religious duty is not enough and not even always required in the way we may think, and certainly never sufficient to redeem the day. God provides the Lamb.

Lent turns our understanding of religion upside-down. We do not seek and serve God, but he seeks and serves us. Of course, we should be seekers. But this is always secondary to the fact that "on the mountain of the Lord salvation shall be provided" (verse 14).

During Lent let us not be deaf to the bleating in the bushes.



Frank Sawyer (sawyer@t-online.hu) was born in BC and studied at Calvin College and in the Netherlands, where he became a pastor. Since 1982 he has served with Christian Reformed World Missions, first in Latin America and then in Hungary, where he teaches philosophy and ethics at Sarospatak Seminary.

The lion has roared

The lion has roared -
who will not fear?
The Sovereign LORD has spoken -
who can but prophesy?

Amos 3:8

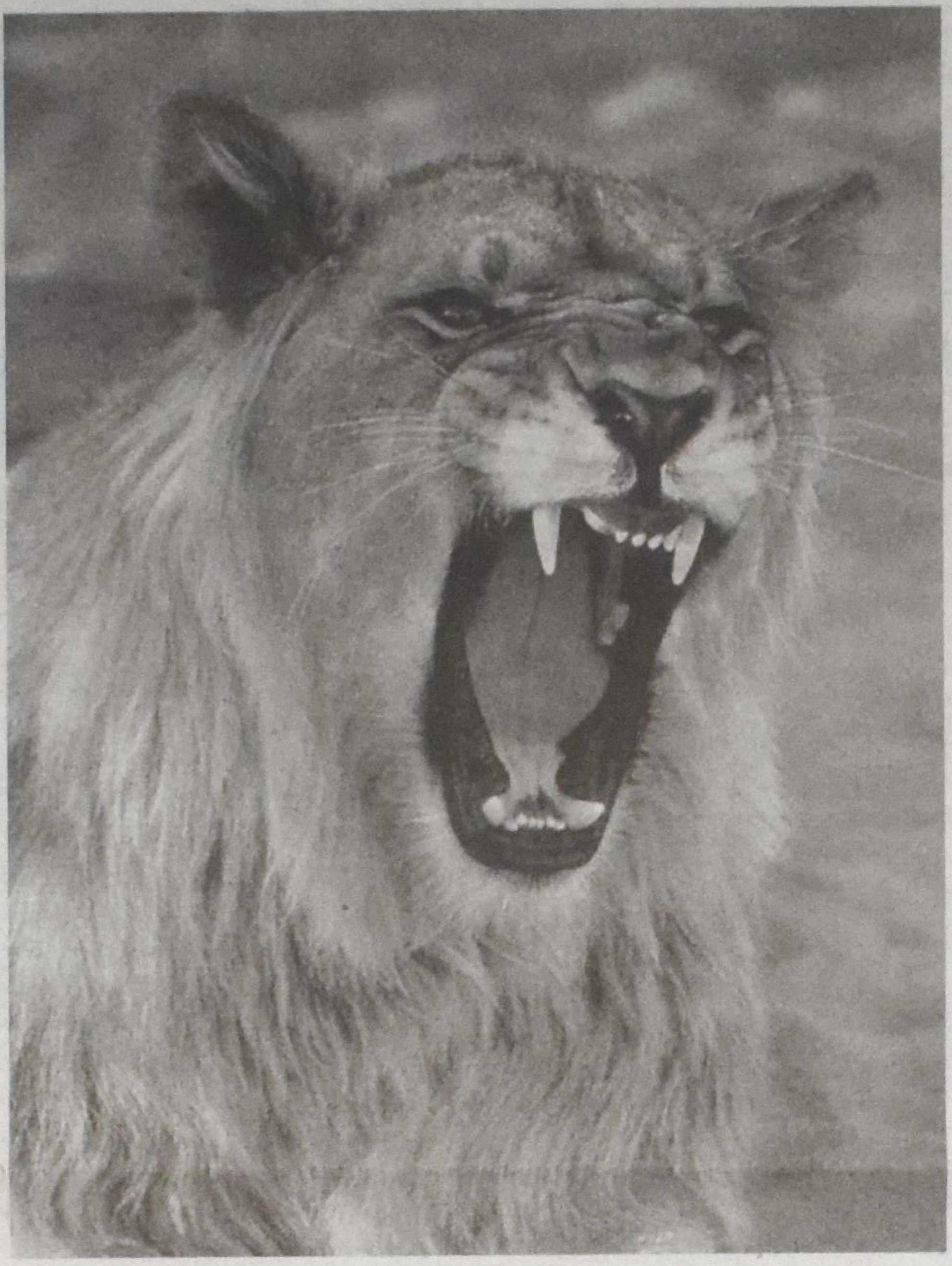
A. Kuyper

We city dwellers know nothing of the mighty roar of a lion. We may have heard that roar from the lion's cage in the zoo and felt a chill down our spine. When we see the lion's nostrils open wide and then hear the roar from his throat even the bravest among us become scared. But the roar of a nearly tame lion safely caged up in the zoo is nothing like the thunderous roar of the wild lion in the jungle, which terrifies all those in his vicinity.

God created that roar. The lion did not discover or invent it himself. The creator of heaven and earth endowed this king of the beasts with its overpowering roar, which originated in the mind of the Creator and came to majestic expression in the throat of this creature.

The unbridled incredible power of this wild animal has a lesson for us as humankind. It is a lesson about power, a power that far exceeds human power. It is a mysterious power. Most of the time it is hidden to us, but suddenly it may show its awesome presence and terrify us. That is why the lion's roar can give us an image of the wrath of God and, at the same time, an image of the rage of Satan.

For the terrifying wrath of the Lord of lords and the rage of Satan both point to superhuman powers that can be portrayed symbolically for us in the image of such ferocious animals. Therefore, these animals have a calling to remind us human beings of awesome powers which far exceed our own.



The lion of the Lord

Scripture frequently compares the coming of the wrath of God to the sudden roar of the lion in the wild. Hosea tells us, "They will follow the LORD; he will roar like a lion. When he roars, his children will come trembling from the West." (Hosea 10:11). Again Isaiah says, "As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey [...] so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights." (Isaiah 31:4). And again, John on the Isle of Patmos tells us, "He gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke." [Revelation 10:3].

When you walk through the wilderness without a care in the world, unaware of danger, that doesn't mean that there is no lion hiding in a thicket, waiting for the moment when he can pounce on his prey. Then, when he sees his prey from afar, he opens his mouth and shakes his mane and issues a bloodcurdling roar that resounds throughout the wild.

This is the image the Holy Spirit brings as an echo of the wrath of God to strike terror among the nations and into the hearts of the people.

Usually the nations and their peoples don't stop to think that in their lives, which resemble a jungle, there could be an awesome God. They just live from day to day, presuming it can go on forever, without knowing any evil, and having no inkling of the power which will judge them. This may go on from one day to the next, from year to year, until suddenly the life of such a nation or person is confronted with the voice of the Lord. They notice the roar of his holy anger, and then as powerless and insignificant beings, they shudder in fear and trembling before the face of this terrible Lord.

Our conscience gives us the ear with which to hear the roar of the Lion. It acts as a wonderful interpreter within us. Radically and suddenly, it grips our attention and interprets for us the meaning of that roar of the wrath of God. Our conscience, like a marvelous inborn memory, can remind us in a instant of a past we would rather forget, bringing back in glorious colours details of our sinful character. Our conscience, like a relentless opponent, never allows us an escape, but always and irrevocably judges us.

Yes, our conscience within us understands the roar of the lion very well, and it makes us shudder, not only because no one can withstand a lion, but even more, because it knows that we have provoked the Lion of Judah. That is the fathomlessly deep root of deathly fear that tears through our hearts.

The Lord God is coming! Just listen to the roar of that Lion. And even more, it is I who provoked that fearful majestic God in his wrath.

The ear of conscience

At that point we must immediately give up all resistance. Trying to escape will not help. And in our fear we will already feel ourselves breaking down and yielding even before you are completely devoured. And that is exactly what will save us!

When the roar of the lion overcomes you and makes you shudder, then immediately all earthly and sinful enticements and egotistic searches for doing things your own way disappear. Gone is your false pretence and your proud self-reliance. As you cower under that roar, your evil heart will break, and your arrogant spirit will be cut to size. That will make for something beautiful.

The roar of the Lion has accomplished in just a moment what all the gentle nudging and all the words of warning and all your pious intentions could not accomplish. Then your heart will resound with the knowledge that you are held accountable to Almighty God, the eternal and all-powerful Creator. And your heart will be lifted up high above all that is mundane and insignificant and will no longer be preoccupied with inconsequential things.

Now the game is over, and we proceed in earnest. Instead of dragging our feet, we will have a steady and surefooted gait. Even when the roar of the Lion ceases, you will not forget the face of the Lord of lords, but walk in the sure awareness of his presence.

If only the children of God would have the ear of conscience, to hear and understand the roar of God's wrath in his majesty. But many have fallen asleep and need to be wakened. Not tomorrow, but now, for the Lord is calling and all his children must take note of his presence. Moreover, there are still so many of God's children who, though they remain unrepentant and unconverted, will one day be accepted as his children. But at present their ears are still plugged and their minds slow in turning to faith. They too must be stopped on the path where they walk without a care, so they can hear the roar of the lion. They belong to the Lord and need to be joined to the people of God.

The majesty of the Lord God is indescribable and overwhelming. Does your heart not hear its roar? And even more, when you have heard the roar of the lion of Judah, can you withstand it?

The whole text of this book is available at http://www.alloferedeemed.co.uk/Kuyper/Kuyper-PentecostPDF.pdf.

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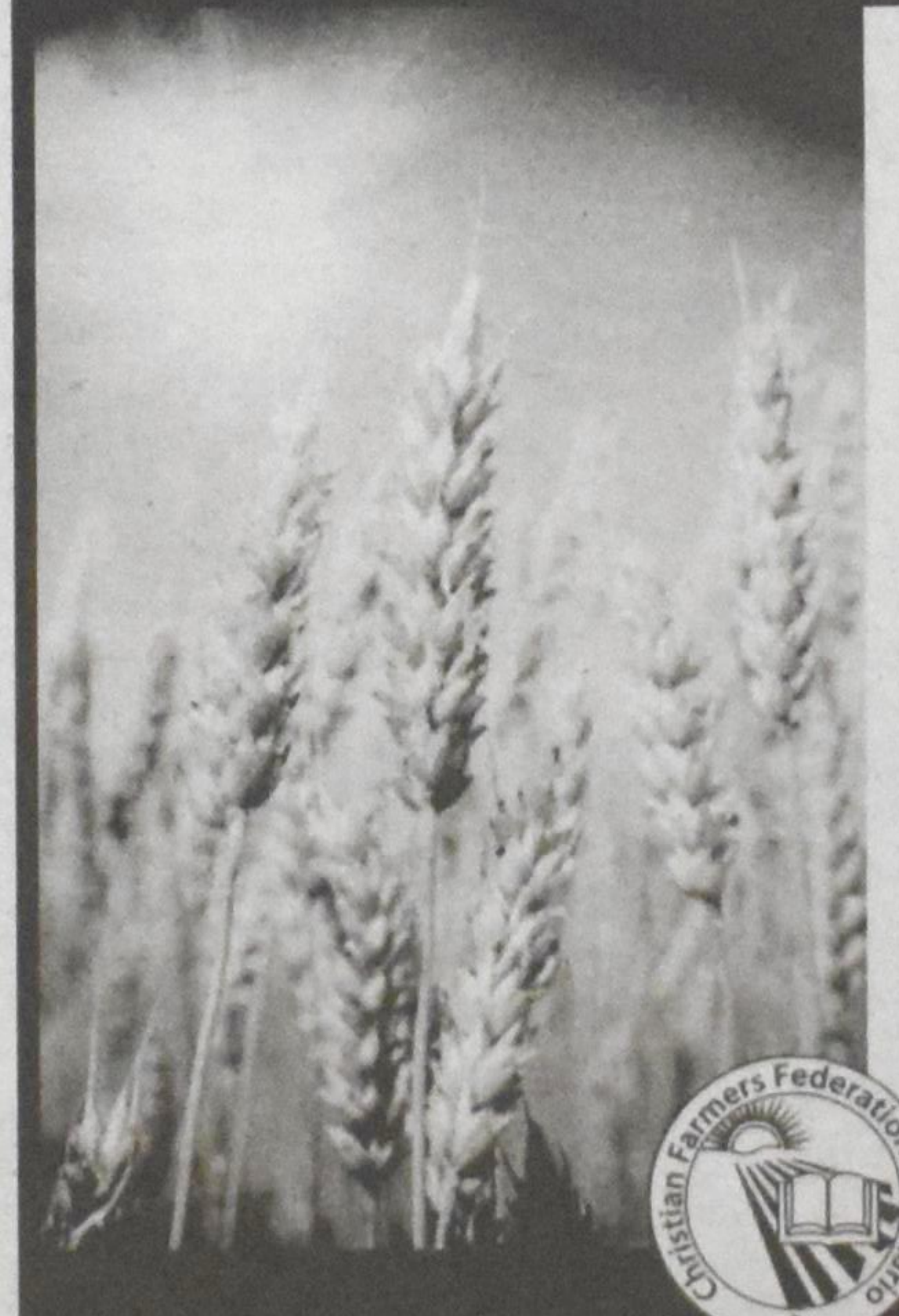

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Justice

Belhar confession...*continued from p. 15*

were doing was an unjust practice, not giving civil authorities their due within God's moral order. Hence, the Belgic Confession was a document which tackled not only doctrinal heresies but also wrong practices (both church practices like the Lord's Supper and Baptism and social practices like respecting civil government), born out of unjust persecution that in turn was born out of doctrinal disagreements between Catholics and Reformers.

Even Martin Luther's 95 theses that started the Protestant Reformation were also connected to social justice issues. In the 16th century, the German bishop Albert of Brandenburg made a deal with the Italian Pope Leo X: in return for making Albert primate of all Germany, Pope Leo would be paid 10,000 ducats that went into the building of St. Peter's cathedral in Rome. Hence, Albert improvised the theology behind indulgences in order to sell more indulgences more easily to raise the money he needed to pay the Pope. It is in this context of corruption that Albert dispatched John Tetzel to sell the indulgences to the German people with the sales pitch, "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings another soul from purgatory springs!" A growing German nationalistic sentiment viewed this sale of indulgences as an exploitation of the German people for the benefit of the Italian Pope's building projects. Hence, the German monk Martin Luther was touching not merely on doctrinal issues but also justice issues when he wrote in Thesis 82, "Why does not the pope liberate everyone from purgatory for the sake of love...? Meanwhile he redeems innumerable souls for money."[1]

Beyond dichotomy

We see, therefore, that the Belhar is not simply concerned about orthopraxis (correct practices) and that the earlier confessions, like the Belgic, are not simply concerned about orthodoxy (correct teachings). Although the connection is more explicit in the Belhar, as with the apostle Paul's example, countering social injustice and countering doctrinal heresy (and idolatry) often goes hand in hand.

Racism and poverty are global and local issues that Christians today cannot ignore. Some draw attention to a phrase in the Belhar's article four that states, "that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged," arguing that this is unbiblical and betrays an adherence to liberation theology.[2] Is God on the side of the poor? Well, theologically, God is on the side of his justice and compassion, and that is where Christians should be, too. But it is clear from Scripture that God watches over the poor, cares for them, defends them and redeems the poor. Even Abraham Kuyper, the great 19th century Reformed theologian, said, "When rich and poor stand opposed to each other God never takes his place with the wealthier, but always stands with the poorer."[3]

We cannot, however, make this opposition between rich and poor into absolutes. "The rich" and "the poor" cannot become absolute exclusive categories as in Marxism. To do that will be to stereotype people and to create a good and evil dualism that goes against the biblical teaching of antithesis, or duality, where the line of good and evil cuts across all categories, cutting across "rich" and "poor," not between them. Doing so would go against the very spirit of the Belhar that rejects any ideology that separates people into exclusive camps, i.e. white and black. The Belhar's language, in my mind, avoids this rich-poor dualism. The Belhar never mentions the "rich" nor identifies them as the oppressors. Rather, it says further in article 4, "that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others." It is not the powerful and the privileged *categorically* but the powerful and privileged *who selfishly seek their own interests and oppress others*, leaving open the interpretation that there are those who use their power and privilege for serving the less fortunate, for helping the poor, for liberating the oppressed.

As human documents, confessions are not infallible, so we can never absolutize them. If this phrase in the Belhar is problematic, I see no reason why we cannot simply put a footnote to clarify the denomination's collective interpretation. The CRC, for instance, has already both relegated a whole paragraph into the footnotes and also rewritten a whole paragraph of the Belgic Confession's article 36. If those paragraphs do not destroy the value of confessing the Belgic Confession as a whole, I do not see why this one phrase should compel Reformed Christians today to throw out the proverbial baby in the Belhar along with the bath water.

Endnotes

1 From Martin Luther, "The Ninety-Five Theses," in *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings*, p. 498. Quoted in Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (IVP 1999) p. 378. For a description of the political corruptions behind the sale of indulgences, see Mark Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Inclusive Introduction to Church History: Vol. 2 Martin Luther to Martin Luther King* (Trinity Press International 1999) pp. 23-25.

2 Paul A. Marshall wrote an excellent brief evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of liberation theology from a Reformed perspective in the book, *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism, 6th Edition* (Baker 1990), Chapter 24: Liberation Theology, pp. 187-194.

3 Abraham Kuyper, *Christianity and the Class Struggle*, trans. D. Jellema (Grand Rapids: Piet Hein, 1950), p. 2. Quoted by Marshall.

Shiao Chong is the CRC Campus Minister & Director of the student club Leadership, Culture & Christianity at York University.

Fish soup in Honduras *... continued from p.16*

December, 2009 – The women's movement in Latin America is very well organised so when President Zelaya was overthrown, women's groups were immediately able to mobilise and start protesting. They were at the forefront of the resistance because they are still struggling for recognition in society and have the most to lose when democracy is threatened.

faithfulness. She read and sang Psalm 145. "I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom." Doña Teresa celebrates the wonder and grace of God

At this moment, women all over the world are living in situations of hostility and violence and oppression. Many have few choices and are often silenced. Their lives are seemingly void of celebration. And yet, Jesus sits at the well and talks with the Samaritan woman. Jesus goes to the house of Mary and Martha and has tea with Mary. Jesus honours the woman who pours perfume over him and cleans his feet. Jesus celebrates in the presence of women.

I thank God for bringing women into my life that inspire me to praise and glorify him regardless of my circumstances, women who help me to recognize God's faithfulness and greatness. On March 8, I remember Doña Teresa and how she celebrates God's goodness, how she sits at Jesus' feet and delights in his presence.

Heidi Kerssies (hrkerssies@yahoo.ca) is an elementary school teacher/principal.

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March 8, 2010

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and great-grandchildren
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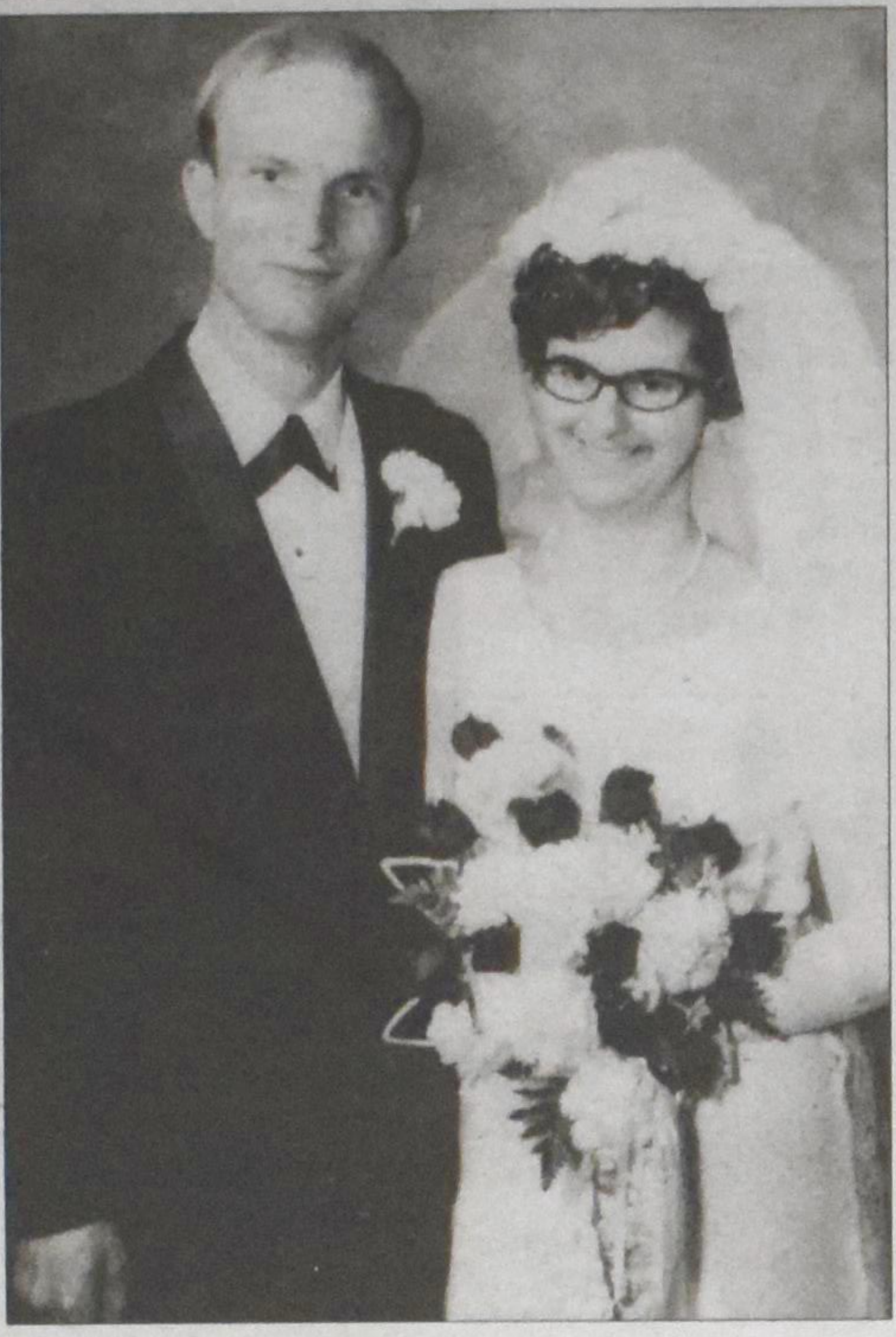
Anniversary



On March 14, 1970 God joined together

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Obituary

July 19, 1938 ~ February 16, 2010

HENDRIKUS "RICHARD" ZANTINGH

For I am convinced that neither death nor life ... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:38a-39b

After a lengthy battle with cancer which Richard faced with courage and an unwavering faith, the Lord called to glory his child on Tuesday February 16, 2010, at his home.

He is survived by his devoted wife, Willy (nee Sjaarda) of 50 years.

The loving father of Ken and Nancy Zantingh, Bruce and Liz Zantingh, Sonya and Gerald teBrake, Chris and Monica Zantingh, Cynthia and Alex Buist, Andrew and Kelly Zantingh, Joanne and Eric DeKorte. The beloved grandfather to 36 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. Lovingly remembered by his brothers and sisters: Joe and Elly Zantingh, the late Ali and Harm Kelly, John and Alida Zantingh, Bert and Fenna Zantingh, Aleda and Mel Rozema, Sienie and Albert Katerberg, Jane and Martin Vanderveen, Henry and Brenda Zantingh, Jerry and Helen Zantingh, Rhea and Ed DeVries. Sadly missed brother-in-law to Hilly, Bob and Gay, Pier and Martha, Aafke, Wieger and Gertie, and Uncle to many nieces and nephews.

Our sincere thanks to Dr. Wasi and the staff of 3z clinic of McMaster Hospital. To Dr. Reza Kazemi, Julie and the Palliative Care Team – thank you also for your professional care and support.

Visitation was held at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Dunnville on Friday. Funeral service took place on Saturday February 20, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. Interment Woodlawn Cemetery.
As an expression of sympathy memorial donations to the Bible League or the Dunnville Youth Impact Centre would be appreciated.

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www.jwhartfuneralhome.com (obituaries page)

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contact: Linie Broer, broer@csolve.net

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5 deciliter / 2 cups dry white wine (Riesling)
or pilsner beer
5 deciliter / 2 cups water
4 vegetable stock cubes
500 grams / 1 lb 2 oz. sauerkraut, drained
8 long shallots or 2 medium-size leeks
3 tbsp cornstarch
2 deciliter / 3/4 cup cream
300 grams / 11 oz. aged Gouda
2 tbsp parsley

Put wine (or beer) with the water in a pot and boil. Let the stock cubes dissolve. Chop or cut the sauerkraut, thinly slice the shallots or leeks and add to the stock. Gently boil for five minutes. Sprinkle in the cornstarch and stir well. Add the cream and bring to a slow boil. Simmer for another five minutes, stirring regularly.

Cut, grate or chop the cheese into smallest pieces.

Pour the soup into a heated bowl, fold in the cheese and sprinkle with finely chopped parsley. Serve with oven-toasted wholewheat buns or baguette.

www.godutch.com/newspaper/recipes.php?id=702

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mar 6 Niagara Chorus presents St. John's Passion. Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby**, 7:30. For tickets, Dutch Store, Grimsby or call 905-688-5550 Ext 5237 (Brock Box Office)

Mar 7 Niagara Chorus presents St. John's Passion, Cathedral or St. Catherine of Alexandria, 67 Church Street, **St. Catharines** at 3 pm. See above for tickets or see ad Feb 22 issue for more information.

Mar 12 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" Market Centre Theatre, **Woodstock**. 8 p.m. See ad.

Mar 13 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" Market Centre Theatre, **Woodstock**. 2:30 pm & 8 p.m. See ad

Mar 14 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3 p.m.

Mar 26 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at Great Lakes Christian College in **Beamsville** 8 p.m.

Apr 2 Grand Philharmonic Choir, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, Howard Dyck, Conductor BACH Mass in B Minor: Good Friday, April 2, 2010, 7:30 p.m. Centre in the Square in **Kitchener.** Suzie Leblanc soprano, Laura Pudwell mezzo, Michael Schada tenor, Russell Braun baritone. Contact: Linie Broer, broer@csolve.net

Apr 9 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at the **London** Dutch Canadian Hall in **London.** See ad.

Apr 16 Hannah House breakfast fundraiser. See p. 21 for more details.

Apr 17 The Wookstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Mister Doe-Het Zelf" at the Blyth Festival Theatre in **Blyth** 8 p.m. See ad.

May 5 Canada/Netherlands Friendship Day, **Burlington**. Doors open at 6 P.M. program starts at 7 pm. Free admission, for more info visit www.cnfa.ca or contact Jack van der Laan at 905 332 7000 or Hans Kloet at 905 336 7184.

May 14-16 Dutch ancestry conference. See p. 21 for more details.

June 26, 27 Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of HCCS (formerly Athens Christian School). Contact www.hccs.ca or 613 498 4176.

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News

Honour killings in Canada:

Experts blame misogyny, not Islam

Harold Alkema

The United Nations estimates that 5,000 women are murdered worldwide every year in honour killings. The victims are usually young women who are killed by family members for rebellious missteps like wearing makeup or revealing clothing, having a boyfriend or seeking a divorce.

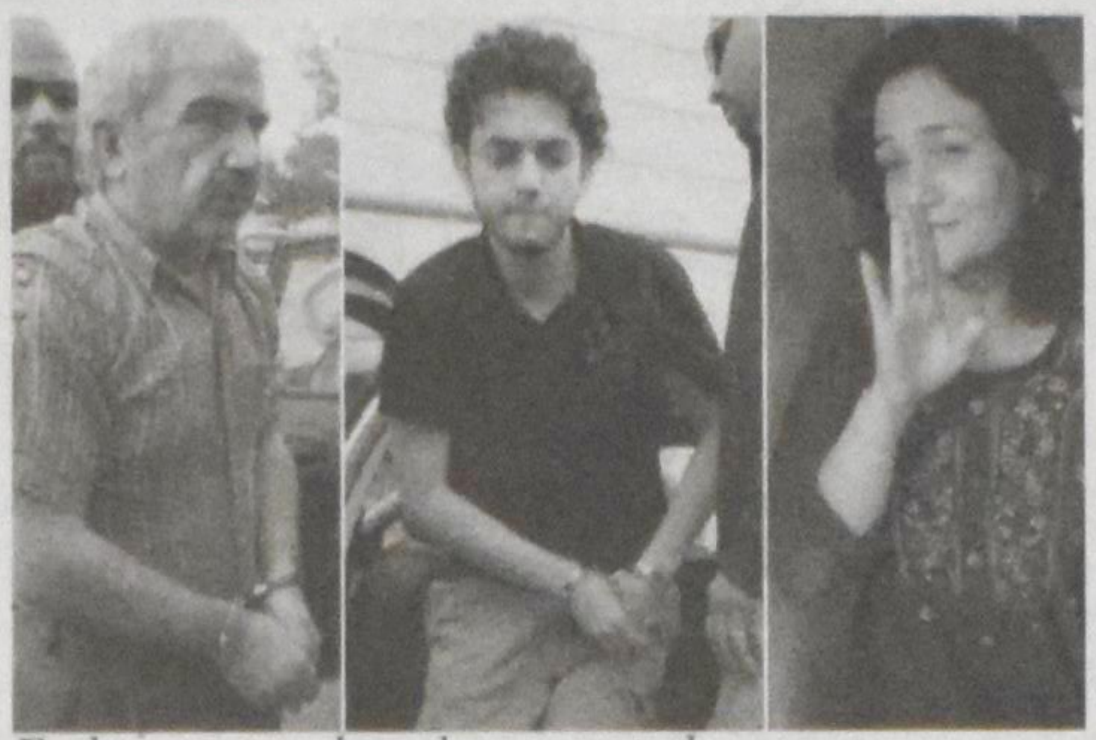
Honour killings usually occur in countries with large Muslim populations. In the last ten years, however, Canada has seen about one dozen murders that could be described as honour killings. Amin Muhammad, a psychiatrist who studies honour killings at Memorial University in Newfoundland, notes that although the number of honour killings occurring in this country is not high, instances are on the rise and Canadians should be attentive to this disturbing trend.

Beyond domestic violence

Undated photo of Shafia family.

A tragic case in which three teenage sisters from Montreal and an older relative lost their lives in 2009 has, in fact, raised the profile of this sort of crime to the point where many Canadians are now much more aware of honour killing. The bodies of Zainab Shafia (19), her sisters Sahari (17) and Geeti (13), and relative Rona Amir Mohammad (50) were pulled from a Nissan Sentra submerged in the Kingston Mills Locks.

Police treated the deaths as suspicious from the beginning, rejecting the family's explanation that the deaths were accidental. Eventually the girls' father, Mohammad Shafia (56), his wife Tooba Mohammad Yahya (39), and their eldest son, Hamed Shafia (18), all from Montreal, were charged with four counts of murder and conspiracy to commit murder.



Father, son and mother arrested.

The authorities have not stated a motive for the alleged crimes, but Kingston Police Chief Stephen Tanner noted that he had an email from a distant relative stating that the deaths were likely alleged honour killings.

In the last ten years, other honour killings have forced Canadians to become more cognizant of violence against women in minority communities as well. While such incidents are disturbing, Aysan Sev'er, a Sociology Professor at the University of Toronto Scarborough and an expert in violence against women, has noted that it is not really one particular ethnic or religious group that is to blame for these crimes. Instead, Ms. Sev'er claims that misogyny, not religion, is the key component in such killings. She adds that perpetrators might use religion as "cloak," but there is nothing in Islam that sanctions the practice of honour killing.

Journalists Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young further argue that when domestic violence or murder occurs in Muslim or immigrant homes, Canadians are often quick to judge the culture of the individuals perpetrating the crimes. When such unfortunate events occur in non-minority homes, however, the perpetrators are usually dismissed as "bad apples" who do not reflect Canadian values in any way.

Many would argue that this is a crude and unrealistic double standard, and while it is impossible to condone honour killings, condemning them should not mean failing to recognize that violence against women and domestic abuse also occur in other Canadian homes as well.

Harold Alkema works as a researcher with a private firm in Ottawa specializing mainly in Native Affairs and historical research.

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7	9			3			8	
	4			5			7	2
	2				7			
		4	3		5			
5								6
			4		6	9		
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8	7			1			4	
	5			7			3	1

What's your story?
Announcing the *Christian Courier* **Short Story Contest!**
Send in your short fiction (1000 to 3000) words by June 15. Winners will receive prizes and be published in *CC*.
See page 5 for further details.

ODDS AND TRENDS

"Fun, friendship and adventure."

The estimated 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts worldwide are celebrating their 100th anniversary this year. The organization began in London, England in 1910, when a group of friends followed their Scouting brothers in secret and later declared they wanted to whittle arrows too. Camping and hiking remain popular activities for Guides today.

Guides tries to self-empower girls and involve them in world issues. This year, Canadian Girl Guides are participating in a service project called Eradicate Hunger and Poverty by collecting food donations; they are also being challenged to learn about 100 different countries.

On May 15, Guiding rallies will be held across Canada to mark the occasion. All Guides, past and present, are invited. Meanwhile, get ready for a knock at your door this spring: if it's a Girl Guide, you can be the first person at work with a few Hundredth Anniversary commemorative cookies in your lunch box.

Stay-at-home moms and bon-bons

"Working mother is a misnomer. . . . It implies that any mother without a definite career is indolently not working, lolling around eating bon-bons, reading novels and watching soap operas. But the word 'mother' is already a synonym for some of the hardest, most demanding work ever shouldered by any human."

Liz Smith, *The Mother Book* (1978)

Having friends can save your life

A recent study out of UCLA, spearheaded by two female scientists, has turned a decades-long theory on its head. Until now, scientists believed that all humans experience a cocktail of hormones that trigger a "fight or flee" reflex in stressful situations. 90 percent of stress research, however, has been done on males. As the UCLA study proved, women release a different blend of hormones than men under stress, which changes their reaction to it. Instead of the "fight or flight" instinct, women's bodies release oxytocin, which encourages them to take care of children "and gather with other women instead." Dr. Klein, one of UCLA's scientists, has dubbed this reaction "tend and befriend."

The UCLA study came out of a joke: everyone noticed that when the women who worked in the lab were stressed, "they came in, cleaned the lab, had coffee, and bonded," says Dr. Klein. "When the men were stressed, they holed up somewhere on their own."

The study has enormous implications for how to understand and deal with stress. Further research on the topic needs to be done, but some scientists believe that the UCLA study explains why women usually outlive men.

It's already common knowledge that having close friendships can lower blood pressure, heart rate and cholesterol. Women who have strong social ties are less likely to become physically disabled as they age. Studies have also proven that women facing the death of a spouse were healthier when they had at least one close friend in their life.

Angela Reitsma Bick